

# Wild

Australia's Wilderness Adventure Magazine

## THE Green ISSUE

**Sustainable walking**

**Carbon credits explained**

**Campfires?**

**Adventures  
without a car**

**Nature for the future**

**Paddling the once  
mighty Murray**

**Nye Bay to  
Lake Pedder**

**Track Notes:  
Royal National Park  
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## Departments

### 5 Editorial

The Green Issue

### 9 Info

An interview with adventurer Andrew Hughes and all our regular news

### 15 The Wild Life

Quentin Chester ponders hidden pathways and the importance of our relationship with nature for the future

### 36 Folio

Rob Blakers records Tasmania's threatened wilderness

### 44 Track Notes

Anna Warr explores a sustainable walk just a ferry/train ride from Sydney in the Royal National Park

### 48 Track Notes

Well off the beaten track; Rob Kettels takes us on a desert walk through Victoria's Sunset Country

### 53 All Things Great and Small

Biting off more than you can chew: the scrub python

### 55 Green Pages

An interview with activist Jill Redwood, Victoria's forests world beaters in the carbon storage stakes and updates from Tasmania, the Kimberley and much, much more

### 63 Gear Survey

John Chapman surveys overnight walking guides

### 67 Equipment

Tips for looking after your gear, 'green' gear and more recipes in From the Billy

### 72 Wild Shot

Car trouble



## Features



## 18 Going Green in the Wilderness

Paul Kinnison reflects on the problems of being 'green' in the bush, while Megan Holbeck takes a look at carbon credits

## 22 A Question of Campfires

Bron Willis examines a fiery debate

## 24 Making the Connection: Nye Bay to Lake Pedder

Peter Kaldor and friends explore the wilderness of South-west Tasmania

## 28 Meandering Down the Murray

Andrew Davison paddles from the source of the Murray to the sea

## 32 A New Wilderness Ethic

Martin Hawes on an alternative way of experiencing the outdoors

## 40 Backyard Adventures: Walking Mt Difficult

Stawell resident Philip Allison finds adventure close to home in the Grampians National Park

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### WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



**Cover** Barrett Higman crossing Cowombat Flat at the New South Wales-Victoria border in the Alpine National Park, very close to the source of the Murray River. Alistair Paton





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# The Green Issue

## Walking towards a sustainable future

THERE WAS A LOT OF DEBATE AT THE OFFICE when we came to choose the cover of our first-ever themed *Wild*. The image (right) of a logging coupe in Tasmania's Styx Valley was my original choice. For the front of 'the green issue', I wanted something that was relevant to the contents of the magazine, as well as striking and different. However, despite my best efforts at running a totalitarian regime, we didn't all agree. Various subversive elements (since sent off for 'retraining' in the mail room) felt that it was too different from our normal cover and perhaps too negative. To help make our decision, we roughed up the image as a cover and sent it out to some of our special advisers. It was interesting to hear their responses; all of them thought that it was an important photo, but they were split neatly (and unhelpfully) in half as to those who thought it was a suitable cover and those who didn't.

In the end, what swayed me was this comment from Brian Walters: 'I see *Wild* as being about the celebration of wild places. Of course that means drawing attention to the desecration of wild places, as this cover does, but the primary message ought, I think, to be about the fun and joy, the inspiration and refreshment, that we can find by venturing into places remote from civilisation. This cover does not do that.' As well as reminding me why he is a Queens Counsel, Brian's response made me remember that ultimately *Wild* is an outdoors magazine, not a conservation magazine, although the two are inextricably linked. It also reminded me of one of the most important messages of this green issue: to save something, you have to care about it. While the above image will invoke both anger and despair in those who love the wild, it is not an image which will inspire those who haven't yet fallen in love with the bush. So we have gone for our usual wilderness cover—a celebration of people in an environment they love.

So what is the idea behind the 'green' issue? It is not to beat you over the head with guilt or harangue you into doing things a certain way—most walkers are already enlightened about being 'green'. No, the idea is to use 'green' as a starting point for new adventures and exploring new ways of doing things. It also attempts to give some practical advice: to educate and illuminate. We hope it will also inspire. Increasingly we are going to have to change the way we interact with the world in our efforts to lessen our impact upon the planet. In one sense this may seem limiting or scary, but in another it is exciting, because it opens up new ways of looking at the world.

In putting together this issue a few things have stood out. One is that until we have less damaging ways of travelling great distances, we may have to begin to adventure more in our own backyard. Recently I was sent an article by a gentleman who lives within a few hundred



Our cover that never was: we planned to use a cropped version of this iconic image of a logging coupe in the Styx Valley, Tasmania. *Matthew Newton*


metres of Port Phillip Bay. His story began with him wheeling his canoe down to the water to take off on a circumnavigation of the bay. He returned to the same point a couple of weeks later, having completed a totally human-powered adventure and seen parts of the bay that few Melburnians would have visited. And this was no tame paddle; some parts of the journey included big stretches of rough open water. While we all dream of distant exotic locations, sometimes the most incredible adventures are only as far away as your backyard and the reach of your imagination.

Another thing I realised is that there are no new ideas in this green issue, nothing revolutionary, nothing that is going to knock your socks off with its brilliance. It is just the same old common sense stuff that many bushwalkers have been practising for generations: minimum-impact camping, car pooling, public transport, buying quality gear, looking after it and making it last a long time. When I did my time in Melbourne's Mecca of outdoor gear, Little Bourke Street, I regularly came across customers coming in to replace their 20-year-old waterproof jackets. At first I didn't believe that a jacket could last 20 years, but with the right care they can. Jackets weren't the only thing that people made last: I saw ancient leather boots which had been through multiple soles, antique stoves and packs that looked as though they may have come over with the First Fleet. Many bushwalkers are by their natural habits 'green'.

The 'green issue' is about more than reducing our footprint on the earth. Activism is at the core of making the world a better place too: it has always been a big theme in *Wild*, most visibly in the Green Pages. Those who vociferously strive to improve what they see to be wrong are rare individuals, seemingly empowered in ways that

the rest of us often feel that we aren't. In our society it is easy to feel powerless—that nothing we say or do can make a difference—but giving into this feeling only makes real what we feel. To save our wild places from destruction, we all need to make a difference, whether by clicking on an online petition, writing letters or dangling from the forest canopy in a tree sit.

Across Australia there are dedicated individuals who are fighting on the front-line in the war against the destruction of our forests, giving up what I think is the most valuable commodity of all—time—in an effort to save forests from the same fate of the Styx coupe. We don't all have the time or the freedom to be activists to this extent, but we can make a difference in many other ways: by donating money, by volunteering our time and expertise, by raising our voices to protest against what we know is wrong and, perhaps most profoundly, by simply passing on our love of the bush to others. For if there is one message that I have continually come across in putting this issue together, it is the importance of knowing the bush: without this knowledge and love, there can be no respect for the value of wilderness. This is the knowledge that we must endeavour to pass on to others.

In this issue there are many gaps and contradictions, but also, we hope, some interesting ideas and things to be learned, from adventures close to home, to learning about carbon credits and the future of the humble campfire. There are interviews with some of our regular contributors as well as articles that explore different ways of looking at the world, along with a few of our regular adventure stories. I hope you enjoy them. 

Ross Taylor  
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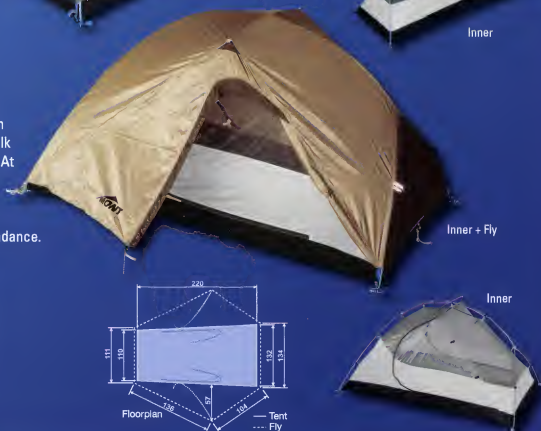
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# Australian Rogaining Championships

Course setter Gary Carrol reports on 2009's biggest rogaining event

The 30th Australian Rogaining Championships were held on 6–7 June, 100 kilometres south-east of Perth in Western Australia (WA). While it is normally large mountains that strike fear into the hearts of rogainers, this event was held on land described as 'gently rolling bushland', requiring careful navigational techniques and precise bearings, especially at night.

Out of 530 entrants, first overall and first mixed was taken out by David Baldwin and Julie Quinn of the Australian Capital Territory, who travelled a very impressive 127 kilometres during the 24-hour event. Local big guns Paul Williams and Ben Corry were second overall and the first men's team. Richard Robinson and Tamsin Barnes from Queensland came third, as well as taking out the second mixed and first mixed veterans (over 40) crowns. Owen Horton and André Morkel from WA were fourth overall and first men's veterans, while Tasmanians Christine Brown and Karen Pedley took out first women's and first women's veterans. Evergreens Peter Squires and New Zealand's Bill and Anne Kennedy were once again impressive, taking out the mixed super veterans (over 55) and ultra veterans (over 65). It's worth mentioning that the first, third, fifth and seventh teams were all mixed teams, demonstrating that rogaining is a sport where women can compete on equal terms with men at the highest level.

The 2010 Australian Rogaine Champs will be held in the Snowy Mountains from 27–28 March.



Competitors in the Australian Rogaining Championships get ready to set off at the start. Sonia Smith. Inset, overall winners Julie Quinn and David Baldwin; they managed to cover 127 kilometres in the 24 hours. Craig Dermer

## Australian Mountain Running Championships

John Harding reports

On 7 June the Ferntree Gully picnic ground in the Dandenong Ranges provided the venue for this year's Australian Mountain Running Championship. ACT runner Mark Bourne had a strong win in the open men's 12.3 kilometres, winning in 50 minutes, 30 seconds. Twenty-year-old Matthew Johnson of Doncaster had an outstanding championship debut, finishing exactly one minute behind Bourne. Australian representative Stephen Brown of Wollongong was third in 52 minutes, 13 seconds.

Hanny Allston of Box Hill, 2006 world junior and senior sprint orienteering champion, won the open women's 8.2 kilometres in convincing style in 37 minutes, 2 seconds. Defending champion Jessamy Hosking of the ACT finished second in 38 minutes, 38 seconds. Local Knox runner Kate Siebold-Crosbie was third in 39 minutes, 3 seconds.

Right, junior men's competitors charging up a hill during the Australian Mountain Running Championships. Patrick Harding



# Andrew Hughes:

## A SHORT PROFILE OF A TASMANIAN ADVENTURER

**Wild talks to this prolific adventurer about his latest epic journey, along with a few tricky questions about being 'green'**

Wild readers have been hearing about the exploits of Tasmanian adventurer Andrew Hughes since 2001, from early long walks in his home state to adventures further afield. Last year he wrote about his mammoth paddle from Hobart up the east coast to Cape York, and this year we featured his paddle around (most of) Papua New Guinea. At present he is engaged in possibly his biggest journey yet, a quest to climb the highest peaks in each Australian state and territory in eight months, making it more interesting by using only human power to get between the eight mountains.

Despite the features he has written for Wild, he obviously treasures his Tasmanian mystique. We don't know much about him, so we thought that we would blow his cover by finding out a bit more...

Andrew is 31 years old and the third of four boys. His father is a keen bushwalker who took his family outdoors, often with close family friend Fred Dutton, who is head of the SES in northwest Tasmania. Dutton's stories of adventure fired the young Andrew's imagination. Born in Scottsdale, he spent most of his formative years living on Tassie's north-west coast in Ulverstone, moving to Hobart at 18 to go to university. He studied geology, graduating with a Bachelor of Science, but managed to find time for many adventures with his brothers and friends. After completing his degree, he spent a year working on a remote goldmine north of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia (WA). He also spent two years running what he calls a 'highly unsuccessful walking business' in Tasmania. In 2004-5 he went back to university and completed a Bachelor of Teaching. Since then, he has been teaching part time or adventuring while running his [www.expeditionclass.com](http://www.expeditionclass.com). Over to Andrew for more details about what he's been up to, and his thoughts on adventuring and our impact on the world...

**Your current adventure 8in8in8 entails covering vast distances: what inspired you to attempt it by 'human power' alone?**

I'm captured by this idea of wandering out the front door one bright, sunny day and keeping on going, and going... From previous journeys I know it's going to be worth it if I just keep at it. For 8in8in8 the idea was to ride out the front gate to the top of Tassie, paddle over to Victoria, jump back on the bike and have a huge adventure before returning to Tassie the same way. The circularity and the simplicity of the idea was, and is, very appealing. At the same time, I use these expeditions to communicate with students through my web site and so they need to be understandable and accessible to that



Andrew Hughes crossing the Flinders River between Normanton and Burketown on one of the bike legs of his 8in8in8 adventure, an epic journey that involves climbing the eight highest peaks in each state and territory in eight months. *Andrew Hughes*

audience. Every kid can stand on the footpath outside their home and dream of simply riding away. That's all I did.

**Have there been many times when you wish you could have stepped into a car or plane to get to your next destination?**

If there was any wishing to be travelling by car, plane or whatever, I'd probably just do it. Last year I rode south from Cairns after returning from Papua New Guinea. I reached Albury, which is neither here nor there, and decided to catch the train to Melbourne. Mum and Dad were visit-



ing Granny and I thought I'd rather see them than keep riding. Another time I had enough time up my sleeve to return to Melbourne from Adelaide by bike instead of plane. I found two discarded bikes near my brother's house and put them together to make one decent one. By the time I reached Portland it had let me down once too often, so I parked it at the op shop and caught the train to Melbourne. But on more planned expeditions such as the current one, there aren't any thoughts of motorised short cuts. Adventures are like scrappy paintings with great globs of paint splashed around the canvas. One of the globs on the big trips is the idea of physical challenge, and to turn around and catch a ride on the bus would change the nature of the painting. It wouldn't be the same picture that I set out to create and that might be disappointing.

**Many people would see using 'human power' as a retro step or a drag. What are the advantages of travelling this way?**

It is a drag! Dragging your arse up a hill with a pack on, dragging a bloody trailer along sandy tracks. But that's the essential beauty of it: if it was as easy as depressing the accelerator and adjusting the air conditioning, there wouldn't be much satisfaction. I don't know exactly why it's satisfying to feel exhausted, or to have put enough days together to get from x to y, but it is. I guess I'm a pretty simple machine like that. Once I discovered that this was how I could be happy, I just kept doing it.

**If you were planning an adventure that required motorised transport, would you consider using carbon offsetting?**

Carbon offsetting would certainly be a consideration for the direct impact of motorised transport. But the conundrum deepens when I begin to think beyond the immediate, seat-on-an-aeroplane type of considerations. Where does the food I use to resupply my food bag come from? How was it grown and how does the shop that sells it operate? Who made my sleeping bag and out of what materials? Why was the road I'm riding on made in the first place? The whole system we live in and from which we derive our adventures is incredibly complex and, to be honest, it usually just confuses the hell out of me. Imagining a different future while struggling to justify what I do in the present is a balancing act. Like most people in an affluent society, I don't want to be labelled as the problem, but if I'm being really honest with myself it's hard to avoid that conclusion. If carbon offsetting promises to lessen the guilt, I'd probably grab it with both hands...and then jump on the jumbo plane anyway.

**Getting away from the green questions, what was it that first got you hooked on getting out into the bush? How did this slowly morph into the big adventures that you do now?**

One summer Dad and Fred Dutton had decided to walk the South Coast Track: they invited my brother James and apparently overlooked me.

When I pressed the point, it was obvious that they thought I wasn't up to the job. In the end I had to walk the Overland Track first to qualify. That gave me two extended walks in a summer, and from then on it seemed reasonable to keep exploring. Part of that meant going further and for longer periods. On finishing uni for the first time, I got together with James and our mate Wisey and cooked up a four-week, South-west epic which became the first article for Wild. Ever since then I've seen the longer journeys as creative endeavours as much as physical feats.

**You are evidently hooked on adventuring—what drives you to keep exploring?**

Nutella. I'm in the Pilbara (WA) and it's hot by Tassie standards, and for the last few days the wind has been beating me down from the west. Today I was lying under a shady tree at lunchtime, feeling exhausted. I was eating Nutella with a spoon and enjoying every lick in a way I never thought possible. Adventures allow that to happen. Other pursuits probably do too, but adventuring is how I have learnt to love Nutella—along with lots of other things—so I'm not about to trade it in.

## Corrections and amplifications

In *Equipment in Wild* no 113 (page 67) the price of the regular size Therm-a-Rest NeoAir was incorrectly listed: its RRP is \$359.

## Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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**Kathmandu Adventure Series M**  
14 November, NSW  
[www.maxadventure.com.au](http://www.maxadventure.com.au)

**3 hr Minigaine R**  
14 November, SA  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**6 hr R**  
21 November, WA  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**Paddy Pallin Adventure Race Series M**  
28 November, ACT  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**8/24 hr State Championships R**  
28–29 November, Tas  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

### February

**The Cradle Mountain Run BR**  
6 February, Tas  
[www.cradlemtnrun.asn.au](http://www.cradlemtnrun.asn.au)

**Paddy Pallin Adventure Race Series M**  
13 February, NSW  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**Upside Down 12 hr R**  
20–21 February, WA  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

### March

**Six Foot Track Marathon BR**  
13 March, NSW  
[www.sixfoot.com](http://www.sixfoot.com)

**Paddy Pallin Adventure Race Series M**  
13 March, NSW  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**Australasian Rogaining Championships 24 hr R**  
27–28 March, ACT  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

### May

**Autumn 12 hr R**  
1 May, WA  
[www.rogaine.asn.au](http://www.rogaine.asn.au)

**WildEndurance BR**  
1–3 May, NSW  
[www.wildendurance.org.au](http://www.wildendurance.org.au)

**North Face 100 BR**  
15–16 May, NSW  
[www.thenorthface.com.au/100/](http://www.thenorthface.com.au/100/)

**Activities:** BR bush running, M multisports, R rogaining. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations





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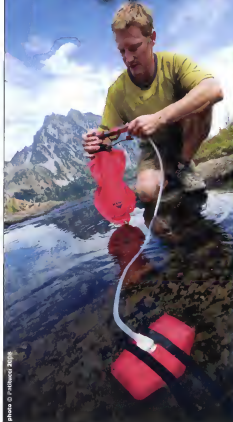
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## Scroggin

## Alex Colley: last of the Tigers turns 100

Geoff Mosley writes that on 1 August friends assembled at Eden Gardens in North Ryde to celebrate Alex Colley's 100th birthday. Colley is undoubtedly our most famous bushwalking conservationist. As long ago as the 1930s he was both a 'Tiger' walker and the leader of the New South Wales Federation of Bush Walking Club's conservation efforts, but that was only the beginning of a lifelong commitment to both endeavours.

In the dedication section of my book *Battle for the Bush*, I wrote 'To Alex Colley, unflagging champion of wilderness—an example to all'. 'Unflagging' was the key word, although I could equally well have described him as 'marathon man'.

The reality is that while every now and again there are great conservation breakthroughs, we know in our hearts that a major ingredient is persistence in advocacy and Colley exhibits this characteristic better than anyone else I know.

Like many of us he gained his original inspiration from the bush. He was not slow to become a conservationist, and by May 1939 he was the Secretary of the Federation of Bush Walking Club's Conservation Bureau.

Perhaps it was inevitable given his background as an economist that his many decades of effort for national parks and wilderness should broaden out to the topic of our flawed relationship with the environment, as shown in his 2006 book *Sustainability*.

Just as the bush inspired Alex, so I hope the bush he saved, along with his lifelong endeavour and prescient writings, will encourage others to pick up the baton and run with it through thick and thin.

## Vietnam Cave

Stephen Burton informs us that a 13-man expedition to Vietnam discovered the world's largest cave passage in Hang Son Doong (Mountain River Cave) in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. The cave was first discovered in 1991 and first explored in 1997 when it was named Log Jam Cave. In April this year, the jam was bypassed using another entrance and the large cave passage was discovered. The passage is 150 metres wide and 200 metres high for about five kilometres of the cave's 6.5 kilometre length, although collapse dolines open to the surface and large rubble and boulder piles interrupt its continuity. The passage size surpasses that of Deer Cave in Malaysian Borneo, which formerly held the record. Hang Son Dong has not surpassed Sarawak Chamber, also at Mulu, which is still credited as the world's largest chamber. The cave was initially referred to as Ke King Khanh (Mr Khanh's Big Cave), and this is the name that appears on the survey.

## Special Recognition Award for Chris Baxter

Glenn van der Knijff reports that Bushwalking Victoria, the organisation representing bushwalkers and walking clubs in Victoria, celebrated 75 years of operation in 2009 by holding its inaugural awards ceremony on 20 June. While many individuals and clubs received awards, Wild's founding father, Chris Baxter, was bestowed the Special Recognition Award. The award was presented to Chris in acknowledgement of his 'contribution to the advancement and recognition of recreational walking in Victoria'. Well done, Chris.




Chris Baxter and his award from Bushwalking Victoria.  
Glenn van der Knijff

## Kosciuszko National Parks: new emergency beacons available

The NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS) and the police have new locator devices for hire for those walking in the area. The 20 new Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) replace the older Emergency Position Indication Response Beacons (EPIRB) as the old analogue network is being replaced by a digital system. The PLBs can be hired from NPWS offices in Tumut, Khancoban, Jindabyne and Perisher for \$20 for up to two weeks after leaving a credit card deposit of \$100.

## The North Face 100

On 16 May nearly 400 runners lined up for The North Face 100, a 100 kilometre endurance race held in the Blue Mountains. The race, which includes 4200 metres of elevation, was won by local Andrew Lee in a record time of 10 hours, 20 minutes and 50 seconds, a remarkable result considering that he had never run more than 45 kilometres previously. He was closely followed by Tim Cochrane in 10 hours, 22 minutes, 21 seconds and Brayden Haywood in 11 hours, 39 minutes, 22 seconds. The women's race was won by New Zealander Julie Quinn, who smashed the previous record by finishing in 12 hours, 13 minutes, 45 seconds, coming eighth overall. Quinn was followed by Beth Cardelli in 13 hours, 34 minutes and 53 seconds, while Robin Cameron came third in 14 hours, 16 minutes, 48 seconds. Of the nearly 400 competitors, 282 participants completed the race, an impressive achievement in itself. 

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3180 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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# In our nature

Quentin Chester writes that the bush and the future of our planet are inextricably bound

IT BEGAN AGAIN WITH A WALK HOME. I stepped out, heading east alongside the main road against a flurry of city-bound traffic. After a few hundred metres a side street beckoned, leading away from the worst of the noise and exhaust fumes. In my mind I had a rough idea of the back roads that might snake towards our place. The fact that the route details were hazy didn't bother me—in fact, quite the opposite.

The original plan had been to catch a bus. That would have saved an hour or so, and there was a bus stop right across the road from my starting point, the garage where our car was being serviced. However, despite the long to-do list that awaited me back home, I decided to hoof it. The previous night had produced the first big rains for the year and along the side of the road lay small banks of wet leaves and pine needles washed downhill by the storm. After weeks of choking heat the air suddenly had a sweet, breezy scent again. The freshness of the morning felt irresistible.

My side street climbed from the valley through tall trees and past circular gravel drives and dense, manicured gardens. Even here it felt as if I was going against the flow. Joggers, mums pushing kids in strollers and suited office workers hurried past to the main road. Some seemed to look at me with a kind suspicion, as if they believed no right-thinking citizen would be meandering so aimlessly among their homes. So, when the road banked right and a rough foot track appeared among the overgrown scrub between a couple of houses, it seemed like a way out, an offer too good to refuse.

Not far in, I bumped into a bloke walking his border collie. I asked him where the path led. 'Oh, it just cuts through to Kanyaka Road', he said with a conspiratorial smile. The name seemed only vaguely familiar. I didn't really care. The trees closed in and homey eaters scuttled and sang among the arcade of bushes. With the sun peeking through the leaf canopy high overhead, small pools of light shone on the damp mass of leaves covering the track. Not for the first time, I was grateful to live in a district where there were mysterious and dishevelled gaps among the streets—the sort of nook where houses back on to scrubby creeks and easements, and the slopes are too steep for builders to mess with.

For several weeks I'd been pondering a very different patch of scrub on the far north-western coast of Kangaroo Island. We had ended up there by chance. The tracks we had wanted to walk in another park nearby were closed 'for maintenance'; regardless, our party of three was fired up for a walk. When a road sign appeared pointing to Cape Torrens Wilderness Protection Area, we didn't hesitate to make a detour. None of us knew exactly what a Wilderness Protection Area meant, but it sounded impressive. Arriving at the entrance, we couldn't find any tracks. Nor did we have a map or compass. All of this somehow managed to urge us on even more.

Strolling into the gully below the car park, it was hard at first to get our bearings. Sugar gums and she-oaks crowded the edges of the dry creek bed. Then gradually we edged up on to an open spur with heath and scattered banksias. Keeping the sun on our left shoulders seemed a reasonable way to steer a northward course. The terrain dipped and rose towards the coast and while we weaved among the grass trees clumped in the sheltered hollows, wrens and grey fantails sprang and swooped about us.

We started aiming for a cluster of gums silhouetted on the skyline. As shapely as a chorus line, they seemed to mark a crest—a vantage point that I hoped might reveal the rest of our journey. Then, as we entered the trees, I realised they were perched on the very edge of the coast. By some improbable transference we had been whisked to our destination. In a short few strides we stepped from fallen bark and broken shadows to the crumbling rim of 200 metre high limestone cliffs. The blazing afternoon glare made the steel-blue waters of Investigator Strait appear even more astounding. Not only that, but updraughts carried the echoes of waves crashing on rocks below and from the distance came eerie sonic spouts—caused, we surmised, by water spilling from some hidden blowhole.

The three of us milled about the clifftop, trying to absorb the phenomenon of this roost. There seemed to be more to the moment than sheer spectacle. In threading our way through an unknown expanse of bush we had surrendered both to the place and to an intuition about how to cross it. That unexpected letting-go skewed our reality, at least for a few hours, so that the sense of scale and surprise seemed to magnify as we walked. By the end we found ourselves on the edge, in more ways than one.

As much as we might want to seal off such moments and preserve the memory of them, they inevitably become part of how we regard our ties to nature. Just lately those ties have been getting more knotted every day. For months after our Kangaroo Island trip, it seemed as though those with environmental concerns were being accused of everything from economic vandalism and fuelling bushfires to conspiring in some epic global-warming hoax.

In the face of the media's blather, it's tempting to bury experiences such as that one at Cape Torrens in a file marked 'Escapes'. There's no denying that wild places make it possible to



Wind-shaped sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) gracing a remote cliff edge of the Cape Torrens Wilderness Protection Area, Kangaroo Island. Quentin Chester

transcend the dross of everyday routines and the environmental woes we have inflicted elsewhere. Yet to switch off and start thinking that the only nature worth bothering about rests on a high pedestal is to detach from the very places where the most important changes have to be made—in the compromised version of nature most of us inhabit.

There's also the attendant risk that escapes can become just another habit or commodity. Before long we're anxious about all the places we haven't seen, and going bush turns into another consumer exercise of looking but never finding—which, in turn, feeds the delusion that nothing is more important than us and our desires.

To veer the other way and track too closely to what's happening to natural systems across the planet is equally defeating. Against the almost daily tally of warnings and statistics, the humble rewards of a Kangaroo Island bush-walk, or any contribution to the environment we might make as individuals, seems pitifully inadequate. Increasingly, the first part of the



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catchy 'Think global, act local' looks like something to do much less than the second bit.

Ultimately there's no high ground or fixed position to run to in our relationship with nature. Mutability rules, on both sides of the equation. We are destined to be both captive to nature's forces and restless shapers of its future. On that score there are always additional practical ways in which we can live more lightly on the planet. However, to really turn things around will take something more than compact fluoro light globes or more docos about vanishing glaciers.

Clearly that something is not hard science or rational argument alone. The unassailable facts about climate change, habitat loss and species decline have been evident for years. Instead, what seems to be missing is a change of heart. This is where people close to the bush come in—those disparate voices who know nature, not as another cable channel, but as a matter of choices, family, discovery, livelihood and history. People with a story to tell, of the kind that gives emotional weight to the issues at stake.

Over the past three years in South Australia, for example, no one with their ear to the ground will have missed accounts from locals on the Coorong and the River Murray's Lower Lakes. Their personal narratives have made the dwindling flows down the Murray and the environmental toll on the drying lakes one of the most passionately discussed topics in the state, even among city dwellers. Meanwhile, on Kangaroo Island, longtime residents have been vocal in their concern about the impact of large-scale blue gum plantations on precious ground water—plantations that happen to besiege the small enclave of bush that is Cape Torrens WPA.

Alongside such issues and testimony, to banter about a fleeting bushwalk to the Cape might appear not just random but insignificant. Nevertheless, the environment deserves as much advocacy as it can get. And those who travel deep into the bush can bring their own hard-won insights, including the knowledge that natural realms rarely offer the security and control we sometimes crave. More and more, the future looks to be about finding ways to exercise and trust our better natures. In that context anyone who enjoys the outdoor life and walking in the wild has a fundamental message worth sharing. The mediums by which the message is passed on will vary, but its gist remains the same: whatever strife nature may be in, it's still the best of anything we've got, our greatest consolation and biggest strength.

That's certainly the spirit I sensed once again on my walk home from the local shops that autumn morning. Though the trip lasted barely an hour, it seemed much longer, and I was surprised to stumble across more hidden walkways that ushered me among streets and stands of tall timber I'd never seen before. On that bright morning, as they had during our afternoon on Kangaroo Island, the discoveries loomed larger than life, like a silent affirmation. And these days that's something worth talking about. 🐾

A Wild contributor since issue no 3, Quentin Chester is a freelance journalist and the author of six books about wilderness places. His preferred habitats include isolated corners of the outback and northern Australia, offshore islands and obscure gorges in the Flinders Ranges. His latest book is *Tales from the Bush* and his web blog is at: <http://quentinchester.blogspot.com>

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# Going green



# in the wilderness

## Paul Kinnison reflects on the inherent problems of being 'green' in the bush

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU BUT, IF I SO MUCH as mention going green to my friends, it always invites a snigger and a 'Didn't you just buy such-and-such or travel to so-and-so?' My green aura quickly turns to shades of red hypocrisy before slowly fading to brown. A light brown, I hope. Hands up, all those out there who are totally green and who just happened to pick this copy of *Wild*? All right, so we are all, to some extent, part of this western consumer society. Although going green in the bush can appear to be a contradiction in terms, how many of us can survive with any degree of happiness without an occasional wilderness fix?

Do I think that we would all be better off sitting at home rather than flying off to go walking in New Zealand or cross-country skiing in the Snowy Mountains? Of course not. I am willing to bet that the majority of readers of *Wild* are active recyclers. You are very likely to have dealings with an environmental organisation such as Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Wilderness Society or the Australian Conservation Foundation. We recycle our waste and support conservation organisations because of our love of the wilderness, a love which comes from an immersion in the natural environment. One rarely comes without the other.

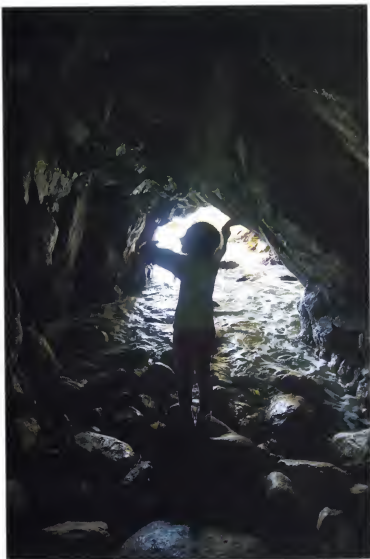
I would also like to point out that we have just gone through decades of uncontrolled consumerism, with devastating effect, not only on the environment, but also on society. According to the American alpinist Yvon Chouinard, there has been a significant drop in the number of people going bush. His theory is that people would rather go to the gym and work out for an hour, followed by a shower and a beer. The number of young people going into the bush is in particular decline. A back-country ranger I met while doing a week-long walk in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California last year said that numbers were down by about half from those of 30 years ago. Not only that, but the average age of walkers was steadily increasing. The ranger blamed the lack of young people in the mountains on DVD players, iPods, computers and mobile phones. If you take all these away from a teenager, they will show severe withdrawal symptoms in less than 24 hours and total rebellion in forty-eight. Is it any wonder Australia's young have an obesity problem? Our youth will need to learn to love this planet because the job of saving it will soon rest on their shoulders.

So my theory is that, although the act of going to the bush is not particularly green, the alternative—not doing so—is even more environmentally destructive. If we agree on this, then we can talk about how to lessen our impact. Many people have good ideas in this regard. I am going to relate some of mine in relation to planning, transportation, equipment and follow-up.

Planning is an essential part of any trip. To drive a long way only to discover that an essential piece of equipment has been left behind is not only frustrating, but also environmentally bad. How many of us have got lost just getting to the start of a walk or climb? Make sure you know how to get there. Be adaptable, and have a fall-back plan in case your preferred activity is not available. When my family used to visit the Blue Mountains for four or five days, we would take equipment for climbing, walking and canyoning. If it was really hot, cool canyons were in order. If it was cool, climbing on a sunny ridge was right. Showers led to day walks. And if the weather was really terrible, a Devonshire tea at the Bay Tree in Mt Victoria was mandatory.

Transportation is usually the least green part of any trip. The places that we most want to visit in this world tend to require aviation fuel or petrol. The least green form of motorised travel is the aeroplane, followed by the car, with buses and trains being the most green. Going by bicycle and on foot are even better options, but in this busy world few of us have the time.

Last year I decided to make an environmental statement of sorts by cycling from Sydney to Mt Arapiles in western Victoria to go climbing. The cycling quickly became the focus of the trip. I joined up with musician Chris Shaw in Cooma. He was on a musical mission to play country pubs



between Sydney and Melbourne. We had a great time staying at cheap pubs. If someone was driving to the next town and had room for our bikes, we would take a lift. We also travelled by train when one was available. And I did make it to Mt Arapiles, where I borrowed a harness and some boots to do some climbing. My point here is that the journey there became an intrinsic part of the adventure, as worthwhile as the destination itself.

If I do drive to the bush, I try to stick to two rules. I say 'try' because, when it comes to going to the bush, I am like an alcoholic who sometimes falls off the wagon: to get that fix, I just have to compromise hard-and-fast rules. First, however, I try to minimise the number of cars going into an area. This may mean walkers meeting up and car-pooling. If buses or trains go there, even better. Secondly, if I drive, I try to keep to the formula that every hour spent driving to get somewhere should mean one day spent there. Driving for six hours means staying for six days. If

According to the author it is important that the next generation develops a love of the outdoors. If they are to save the planet, the best way of learning to love it is to start early; Sarah Turvey exploring a sea cave in Ketchum Bay, South Coast, Tasmania.

Left, Sarah again, this time having fun in the mud on the South Coast Track, Tasmania.

Both photos by Glen Turvey



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# Paying for your carbon sins

## Megan Holbeck helps you navigate the murky world of offsets

The concept of carbon offsetting is simple enough: consumers choose to pay to reduce greenhouse gases to compensate for emissions that they've caused. But this simple definition hides a complex, complicated and so far largely unregulated world where offset prices range from \$6–\$2 a tonne, projects cover everything from tree planting to wind farms to burning native forest 'waste', and carbon calculations range very widely. This has led to cynicism about the real value of offsets, as well as confusion as to what type is best, and even whether they are worth buying.

One of the most common criticisms of carbon offsets is that they are a 'get out of jail free' card that allows people to maintain their high-impact lifestyle while off-setting their guilt. (For a parody of this, visit [www.cheatneutral.com](http://www.cheatneutral.com) where you can 'offset' your love-rat lifestyle with someone else's faithfulness.) To counter this criticism it's important that you first reduce your emissions as much as possible, with offsets then used to compensate for remaining emissions.

### Types of carbon offsets

Companies set up or finance projects which reduce greenhouse gas emissions, creating offset credits which can then be bought by consumers. The most common types of projects are forestry activities—the planting of new trees to soak up carbon or the avoidance of deforestation; energy efficiency (from upgrading manufacturing processes to distribution of energy efficiency products); avoiding methane emissions through the better management of landfill, livestock and coal-mine waste; and renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass.

The ability of an offset project to lead to real, measurable emissions reduction depends on many things. Firstly, it must be additional to what would have occurred anyway: it cannot be a change that would have occurred due to regulatory change or normal practice. It must also be permanent, something with which many forestry projects battle as trees can die, leading to smaller than anticipated results. Changes in emissions outside the project but due to its activity must also be taken into account: for example, logging may be increased in one area to compensate for a reduction elsewhere. Proper monitoring and verification—ideally by a third party—is necessary to ensure that the reductions claimed by the project have eventuated, have only been counted once, and that replacement credits will be secured if the project does not produce sufficient reductions in emissions.

In the same way in which your own impact should be reduced before you offset, projects which prevent carbon entering the atmosphere in the first place are generally considered better than those which remove carbon from the atmosphere. Such projects are also generally easier to monitor and last for shorter periods of time, making permanence and other issues easier to check. According to [www.choice.com.au](http://www.choice.com.au): 'projects that change or prevent the underlying activities that create greenhouse gases, such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, avoided deforestation

and diverting waste from landfill, are better ways to combat climate change in the long term.' However, as well as reducing emissions, some projects provide secondary benefits such as increasing biodiversity, educating the community and reducing other pollutants, which may influence the offset you choose.

### 'The best' offsets

Before you run from the room screaming, 'It's all too complicated!', let me interject: there's help at hand. In recent years not one but two independent web sites have been set up to provide information on carbon offset providers and prod you from your state of offset inertia. Carbon Offset Watch ([www.carbonoffsetwatch.org.au](http://www.carbonoffsetwatch.org.au)) was set up by Total Environment Centre, Institute for Sustainable Futures and Choice, resulting in 'the first independent ranking of Australian offset providers', rating 20 providers from outstanding to average. Carbon Offset Guide Australia ([www.carbonoffsetguide.com.au](http://www.carbonoffsetguide.com.au)) is 'an independent directory of Australian carbon offset providers' giving information regarding a project's accreditation, price, location and type to allow businesses and consumers to make informed decisions.

There are several key criteria that are most important when buying carbon offsets. Firstly, offsets should be independently accredited by a recognised scheme. There are many in the market, from government standards to NGO companies, operating here and overseas. Carbon Offset Watch concluded that offsets accredited under the international Gold Standard and Clean Development Mechanism were of the best quality, while those accredited by VCS, VER+ and Greenhouse Friendly were also of very high quality. However, offsets with independent accreditation are a better bet than offsets without any third-party accreditation. Offset retailers also need to give detailed information about their products and the projects they use to generate offsets, and should help you to estimate your carbon footprint and explain how it is calculated. Evidence of your offset purchase should be given, and either you or the retailer needs to 'retire' it from the market so that you can ensure the emissions you have saved aren't claimed by someone else.

### Costs

How much it costs to compensate for your carbon 'sins' depends on what exactly you want to compensate for. Using Climate Friendly, you can purchase the 'citizen package' and offset the average Australian annual emission of 28 tonnes for \$800. Of course, with the price of offsetting a tonne of carbon ranging so widely and retailers using different methods of calculation, you could end up paying much more or less than this to offset your load. The best idea is to buy the highest quality carbon offsets you can (using all the helpful information above and on the net...) rather than the cheapest. To give you some idea, a one-way flight from Sydney to London produces around five tonnes of carbon, while a return car trip from Melbourne to Brisbane in a small car produces less than a tonne.

you still feel guilty about your carbon footprint, there are plenty of companies supplying carbon offsets that can be purchased quite cheaply (see box). And, of course, there is always a local environmental organisation that needs help with tree planting or noxious weed control.

Then there is the buying of equipment. Part of being greener is trying to use less. When I first visited an outdoor shop I was in heaven: all those beautiful packs, tents and sleeping bags lining the walls. I am sure I had heart palpitations and sweaty palms. It was a little like a passage from Bill Bryson's wonderful book, *A Walk in the Woods*, in which he goes into a local outdoor shop to buy equipment for the Appalachian Trail:


*I have never been so simultaneously impressed and bewildered. I spent a whole afternoon going through stock. He (the salesman) would say things like: 'Now this is a 70-denier high density abrasive-resistant fly with ripstop weave. On the other hand, I'll be frank with you here'—and he would lean towards me and reduce his voice to a low, candid tone, as if disclosing that he was once arrested in a public toilet with a sailor—'the seams are lap-felled rather than bias-taped and the vestibule is a little cramped'.*

Bryson bought way too much gear. By all means, choose well-made brand names that will last a long time, but remember that it is very easy to become a gear junkie. I did a long walk a few years ago with some lightweight-walking enthusiasts. They had looked at everything to shave kilos off their backs. Their packs had only one compartment and lacked all the straps that mine had. No inflatable mats for them; instead, they had light closed-cell foam mats. Their stoves were made of cat-food tins and burned alcohol. I would say that my loaded pack weighed a third as much again. They travelled faster and more comfortably than I did, and their gear was cheaper and greener.

The follow-up at the end of any walk is also essential. It is something that I am particularly bad at, and I frequently get into trouble for not airing equipment and for failing to pack it away properly. If you want your gear to last, you need to care for it properly (see the article by Ian Maley in *Equipment for tips on looking after your gear*).

It is also worth having a look around the area where you live. Chances are, there are wonderful outdoor areas close at hand that you can enjoy on a regular basis. We are particularly lucky to have Pittwater and Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park right next to our home on Scotland Island. We can hop on our kayaks and paddle over there in minutes.

One wonderful thing, in a funny sort of way, that happened to me was turning 60. This made me eligible for a seniors card (the grumpy card, as one friend puts it), which has allowed me to jump on trains, buses and ferries in the Sydney area for the princely sum of \$2.50 a day. My area of walking and exploring has expanded. A month ago I travelled by all three of the forms of transport mentioned to do a two-day walk in Royal National Park (see *Track Notes* in this issue).

The essence of going green is very similar to that of venturing into the bush: be as minimalist as possible. Everything you need for survival is in that rucksack. With luck, that attitude may spill over into your everyday living: tread softly and enjoy our wonderful earth. 



# A question of camp

## Bron Willis asks whether campfires still have a place

THE TENTS ARE PITCHED AND COLOUR FADES out of the sky. Shadows slowly dissolve as a group of campers settle into the ease of their evening routine. But then, cracks appear in the ranks. Someone asks the smoky question: who wants a campfire?

If ever there was a challenge to test the conviction of one's sustainability beliefs, surely it is the campfire on an icy night under the starry Australian sky. Warm and inviting, calming and comforting, the campfire is a familiar image in the landscape of the Australian bush. But does the campfire really belong in today's outdoor experience? Or are you a party pooper if you protest? Should outdoor enthusiasts be prepared to stick their necks out for the bush they love so much? For citizens of the outdoors who, in spite of everything, treasure the welcome flickering of a simple campfire, this is dubious territory indeed.

For some, the line is not so blurry. Phil Ingamells is Parks Protection Officer at the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA). He believes that campfires are part of an outdated Australian bushwalking experience: 'There is a tradition attached to campfires, and I can understand that, but we need to move toward establishing new traditions... There is really no need for a campfire when you're out walking any more.'

Images of a comforting campfire resonate with the Australian bush pioneering tradition, captured by Australian painter Frederick McCubbin in his turn-of-the-century paintings *Down on His Luck* and *The Pioneers*. Banjo Patterson's jolly swagman 'sang and...watched and waited 'til his billy boiled' on the campfire in 'Waltzing Matilda'.

Bushwalking aficionado and publisher John Chapman began walking in the early 1970s. 'Campfires played a fairly significant role at that time', he says. 'It was pretty much standard to have one every night... Although after a while you had to go further and further from camp to collect firewood, you didn't really think it could be a problem.'

A few decades down the wilderness track and major changes are upon us. Heavy canvas tents and cumbersome leather packs have been replaced by a new generation of equipment. Lightweight, breathable and warm fabrics keep us toasty until we snuggle into the luxury of down borrowed from a goose. Fuel stoves are standard kit and the outdoor adventure retail market has everything else you could need to stay comfy.

So do we really need a campfire? Resoundingly, the answer is no. But, as *Wild* columnist

Quentin Chester eloquently described in *Wild* no 71, the simple qualities of a fire go far beyond physical comfort: '...a fire provides an instant communal focus, a site for conversation and contemplative meanderings...with a fire you can be in company without the need to talk.' Chester is not alone in his love of the crackling comforts of a campfire, and few would disagree they are a luxury. But what price are we paying for that luxury?

In the early-to-bed, fire-free corner, which includes land managers, conservationists and many bushwalkers, the risk of campfire escape and resulting wildfire is one motivator. The evidence of such occurrences is considerable. Areas severely burnt by escaped campfires include the Kimberley's Mitchell Plateau in 2005, Tasmania's Lake Vera (near Frenchmans Cap) in 1980 and around Savage River (near the Tarkine) in 2008. Judge Leonard Stretton's Royal Commission into the 1939 Black Friday bushfires also included campfire escape as a prominent cause.

According to Peter Grant from the Parks & Wildlife Service in Tasmania, some areas, such as the western half of Tasmania, are more susceptible than others. 'Peat soils underlie large tracts of Tasmania', he says. 'Campfires

in such areas can dry out these normally wet soils and set them smouldering. Once alight, peat fires are very difficult to extinguish, often burning slowly underground for months.'

But a campfire doesn't have to escape to have a lasting impact. Phil Ingamells of the VNPA argues that campfires have a significant impact on the local ecology. 'Campfires take the life out of the soil', he says. 'Micro-organisms are killed and the nutrients in the soil are changed. If you light a campfire in an alpine area, where recovery is very slow, the ground scar can be there for five or more years to come.' Ingamells also argues that many species rely on fallen timber for habitat. 'Ninety per cent of species in natural environments are insects and fungi. Much of the biodiversity of a natural environment [consists of] things we don't really see. A lot of those things operate on the forest floor.'

The importance of fallen timber for biodiversity is of particular interest to scientists at the Mulligans Flat-Gooroooyarroo Woodland Experiment, a joint project between the Australian National University and the ACT Government. Dr Adrian Manning is Research Manager for the project, which is looking at ways of improving degraded box gum grassy



# fires

woodlands, including the reintroduction of 2000 tonnes of fallen timber. The plan is to create an 'outdoor laboratory' in these woodlands, which are listed as critically endangered, partly as a result of the removal of fallen timber for firewood. Although it is too early for conclusive evidence, Manning's team have already detected positive outcomes from adding fallen timber.

According to Manning, fallen timber plays an important role in maintaining biodiversity. 'In box gum grassy woodlands, dead wood provides habitat for reptiles, birds, small mammals and insects, and plants can also grow in the shelter created by the logs, which protects them from grazing animals', he says. 'Dead wood is important in ecosystem processes including nutrient cycling, and creates a good microclimate by retaining moisture and moderating temperatures. It also gives an ecosystem structure and more complexity—which creates more niches in which organisms can live and grow.'

Throw climate change into the mix and the argument against campfires grows stronger. Cameron Crowe, CEO of outdoor skills and ethics program Leave No Trace, cites the 'vastly changed moisture levels' in many Australian forests as a factor. 'Huge wildfires have been experienced in the ACT, Victoria and Tasmania, where much less moisture is retained in fallen vegetation than used to be. Campfires in those much changed environments are less sustainable.'

So, if there is a solid case for a move away from campfires in our parks, what are land

managers doing about it? Fire regulations vary between states, but generally they allow fires in constructed fireplaces only and restrict the lighting of fires in specific areas and on days of total fire ban.

While the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service encourages minimal impact campfire practices, the language used in its publications is not prescriptive: 'One of the best ways you can help to manage fire in our national parks and reserves is to only light fires in proper fireplaces, or better still, not light fires at all.' Parks Victoria web site guidelines state that: 'Fires may be lit only in fireplaces provided, or as directed by signs.' Many state parks authorities list some parks, such as the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, parts of Kosciuszko National Park and the Alpine National Park, as fuel stove only areas.

According to Peter Grant, 'the recovery of bushland around popular campsites since "fuel stove only" was introduced is obvious. You can compare those with other places where campfires are still used, and you'll observe that a zone of casual destruction spreads out from campfire areas.'

Outside these fuel stove areas, however, the message is less clear. Well-used fireplaces, complete with hotplates and an iron stake for hanging your billy on, exist at remote campsites in the Bogong High Plains area, despite the lack of firewood. The result is that walkers take firewood from around the campsite to fuel campfires. The onus is therefore on the bushwalker to make informed, responsible choices.

Although Parks Victoria was unavailable for comment about these specific fireplaces, Phil Ingamells suggests that they are an aberration. 'Constructed fireplaces are generally now only in areas where firewood can be delivered. Fireplaces really shouldn't be there unless there is firewood delivered. They are probably there just because they've been there for a very long time, and they will probably be removed in years to come.'

In Tasmania, that process has already begun. According to Peter Grant, wood stoves and fireplaces that existed in some huts in the alpine section of Mt Field National Park have been removed or rendered unusable in the last 12 months, in an effort to 'follow principle with practice'. Some huts on Tasmania's Overland Track still use coal-burning stoves; however they are impossible to light without a small quantity of dry twigs taken from the nearby environment.

According to Leave No Trace's Cameron Crowe, outdoor users should be better armed to make these choices. 'These days, many people are taking up outdoor pursuits who are not informed of sustainable campfire practices. There is a need for a comprehensive national minimal impact education campaign

to improve people's awareness of campfire issues.'

Ingamells suggests a minority of outdoor users are less aware than others. 'There is an attitude with car-based activities, in areas like the Murray River, that it's acceptable. Some are slower to catch on than others... Generally speaking, the walking community is right behind [developing] new traditions. The movement in areas where people walk is well ahead of the park managers. The whole movement was started by bushwalkers. Parks managers went along with that quite happily, but it came from bushwalkers to start off with.'

Grant argues that the Tasmanian experience was rather different. 'Park managers pioneered fuel stove only areas in 1989, and there was little initial support from the bushwalking clubs, for instance.'

As leaders of the next generation of outdoor citizens, schools such as Methodist Ladies College (MLC) play a key role in shaping young people's experiences of the bush. Kendall Clifton-Short is Deputy Director at Marshmead, MLC's remote outdoor education campus in the Croajingolong National Park. One of the curriculum's focuses is to teach students how to live in the outdoors in a sustainable way. 'We use minimal impact campfire practices', says Clifton-Short. 'We do all our cooking on Trangias. If we do light a fire, it is in a designated site, which has already been constructed. We take our own wood in, and if we don't use all of the wood, we leave it behind for the next people to use.'

Does Clifton-Short see in her students a changed attitude towards campfire practice? 'Kids like a campfire, they associate it with camping', she says. 'But it's easy to teach them how to do it in a sustainable way. There's no need for huge big roaring campfires. The kids still appreciate a small, more intimate campfire for ambience, which they can sit up close to, and they can learn to recognise when a campfire is sustainable and when it's not.'

Attitudes have come a long way since the 1930s and 1940s when, John Chapman says, bushwalkers and conservationists were too busy pushing for national parks to look at issues such as the use of campfires. 'They didn't look at the finer detail then as they were focusing on the bigger conservation picture. But after we succeeded in getting national parks set aside, we started looking around and realised we'd better start looking after them. Things that initially seemed insignificant have become significant.'

Next time a chilly evening is approaching in the bush and you're asking yourself, 'Does it really make much difference if I light up or not?' just remember: where there's smoke, there's fire. ☀

Three faces by the fire, the Tarkine, Tasmania.  
Glen Turvey



# MAKING THE CONNECTION: **Nye Bay** to **L**

Three walkers from  
different eras—  
*Peter Kaldor, Tim Leane*  
and *Carl Johnston*—  
explore the remarkable  
wilderness of  
South-west Tasmania



# Lake Pedder



From bottom left to right, a perfect evening on the Big Propsting.

Carl Johnston.

Carl crossing the Hardwood River.

All uncredited photos by the author.

Heading into the Davey valley. Tim at Jones Pass, with Lake Pedder, their final destination, in the background.

WITH RUCKSACKS LADEN WITH FOOD AND GEAR FOR TWO WEEKS WE step into the small Cessna; excitement is mixed with apprehension about what might lie ahead.

The three of us come from different backgrounds. I am in my 50s and have walked in Tasmania for decades, enjoying its remote places for their sense of isolation. Having explored the west coast and paddled the Davey River valley, I am keen to walk from the west coast to Lake Pedder over the Big Propsting—one of the most remote Tasmanian peaks. Having made previous attempts, I want to succeed before I get too old!

Carl and Tim, both of whom are in their mid-20s, are in a very different position. Carl has done a little walking in Tasmania and Tim none at all. They have read a great deal and are keen to discover what is involved.

## Day one

After months of preparation, scanning maps and aerial photographs and reducing gear to bare essentials, it is a perfect flight to Melaleuca. Immediately a new world opens up as range after range passes underneath—Federation Peak, Precipitous Bluff, the Western Arthurs, Bathurst Harbour—a wonderful wilderness all around. A motor boat takes us up Melaleuca Inlet, then we board a fishing boat to travel across Port Davey to open sea and a sheltered cove for the night. What a day!

## Day two

Seeing the wilderness from the perspective of fishermen is a whole new experience. They bring a love of the land looking in, whereas walkers view the land and the ocean looking out.

From off Nye Bay a runabout drops us at the Giblin River. A few quick cheerios and suddenly we are left to share our journey and its challenges and joys over the next two weeks.

We spend a perfect day wandering the beach and the Giblin estuary, which are backed by huge sand dunes. By a perched lake a wallaby jumps off as we disturb it. Piles of shells hint at the Indigenous presence here in times past.

I ponder the life of Indigenous people living their days here, and also the consequences of their encounter in the early 1800s with Edward Augustus Robinson, as he sought to move them from this part of the state. I am also feeling the responsibility that goes with being the organiser. It is a strange mixture of idyll and stress.

**Carl:** I feel the anxiety that comes with committing to a two-week walk. Miraculously, a sleep under a tree on the beach relieves my anxieties and my mindset changes for the rest of the trip.

Rivers, creeks and coastline in Tasmania are often lined with very inhospitable scrub. We consider the options for leaving the Giblin to reach the coastal plains behind. I have followed some unsatisfactory routes in the past. Carl suggests a solution that provides us with an easy exit. So often someone with a fresh perspective generates creative solutions to challenging problems! A wonderful sunset on the dunes precedes a good night's sleep. Real walking starts tomorrow.

## Days three and four: to the Upper Giblin

The next few days involve crossing coastal plains, then several ranges, to the base of the Big Propsting. The view from Mt Gaffney reveals an impressive array of peaks: the De Witts and Port Davey to the south, Federation Peak, the Western Arthurs and the Franklands to the east, and to the north the Prince of Wales Range and the dome of Frenchmans Cap—all from the one spot!

**Tim:** It is such a vast landscape. Yet our world is contracting to a microworld of three people. Bran Willis (in 'A Great Ocean Walk', Wild no 105) sums it up for me: 'Something in your brain has changed. You're on a different journey now and it's slower.' No work, advertising or traffic to numb the mind, just thoughts about the day's walk and a hot dinner.

We find a campsite in scrub in one valley, then the next day we go up and over another range. Careful navigation results in a good route down to the Upper Giblin. The weather is extremely hot as our tired threesome climbs down a steep bank through scrub to the river. A shallow wade to the other side and we make the best of a limited campsite. Exhausted, we enjoy the peaceful river after some days of scrub and ridges.

*Part of this journey has been to say goodbye to sacred places from times past, to reconnect, to be glad and sad at the same time. To see them with older eyes is to appreciate them more, savouring them for what they are, not just for the adventure.*

This climbing and descending with full packs in sweltering heat leaves me wasted and aware of the more limited physical capacities that come with getting older. I don't have the energy I once did. Oh, for the energy Tim and Carl have!

Overnight rain doesn't affect our sleep but the river rises well over a metre overnight, transforming the gentle stream into an impassable torrent. A portent of things to come, the mass of brown water rushing past us is awesome. Water falling on the upstream plains is constricted through the narrow gorge at our camp. We are thankful we camped above the river.

### Days five and six: over the Big Propsting

The crux of the journey to the Davey valley lies in front of us: ascending the Big Propsting. We have identified a good U-shaped ledge up to the summit plateau, but we still battle scrub on to the ridge. Pulling himself over an embankment, Carl finds his handhold is 30 centimetres from an anxious tiger snake that rears its head in response to the intrusion. Carl remains motionless. The snake decides on retreat rather than attack and slithers away, a few centimetres from an equally motionless Tim. We ponder the consequences had the snake chosen a different course of action!

Gathering height, we camp halfway up the massif of the Propsting with a 360° view of the Giblin and Davey River valleys. Above us the mountain sits waiting. We have a good water supply and a waterfall flows where the map suggests there should be a ridge! It is a wonderful amphitheatre of rocks, a magic world in which to play, view the sunset and see out the day.

**Carl:** Today was a real highlight for me: halfway up the peak I climbed to a sharp ridge with stunning views. The entire landscape was bathed in golden late afternoon light and an eerie stillness. It was a sensory overload.

**Tim:** Our campsite that night, perched halfway up behind a rock for wind protection, was a highlight for me too. The land, so still today, seems to be quietly making fun of the self-importance of my normally erotic lifestyle.

The next day dawns fine, so we head upwards to the summit. Some scrub slows progress but walking and scrambling is generally straightforward, with alpine vegetation replacing button grass. On the ridge crest it is completely still and eerily silent, broken only by some little birds darting around. On top a cairn holds a small bottle with some indecipherable names from eons ago. We gaze at the view in all directions, back to Nye Bay and onwards to what is to come. Options for reaching Lake Pedder—east over Greystone Bluff or north to the Frankland River and Jones Pass—lie below us like a giant aerial photo. Satisfaction with our achievement is mixed with feeling very small and insignificant in this ancient landscape; we are conscious of both its resilience and its frailty. I am old enough to remember that once there were plans to flood the Davey valley.

This is my third time lucky after attempts from the west coast and while paddling the Davey and Crossing Rivers. Satisfaction at being here is magnified by past disappointments. Good things are worth working for!

We have a summit lunch, then head down a ridge into thick scrub. Then we follow a button grass lead into the Hardwood Creek basin and find a beautiful creek on which to camp. As the evening light disappears behind the Propsting Range we feel a sense of emotional release: we are past what we feel is the crux of the trip.

**Carl:** The descent was bathed in a great sense of relief and joy. We left the summit lighter in spirit. As we descend into the Hardwood Valley, we get lost in conversation. Nothing pressures us as we wander, discussing everything from parenting to politics, interrupted intermittently by the need to pick a new spur. It is beautiful to feel so comfortable and at home here.

This euphoria continues into the evening and the next day, until we are jolted from our relaxed states—Mother Nature has some other twists and turns in mind!

### Days seven and eight: into the Davey basin

The next day we picnic our way through the grassy valley of Hardwood Creek towards the Davey. A stretch of hard scrub, and then lunch is had on some rocky ledges by the river. Here our euphoria is shattered by thunder and dark clouds, suggesting imminent changes in the weather. Thirty minutes later the heavens open. In a second, a sunny day becomes a maelstrom of heavy rain and hail. Donning various forms of wet-weather gear, we struggle over ridges into the Davey valley.

**Carl:** Coming so suddenly and furiously, the rain jolts me back to reality. The temperature plunges, we are instantly drenched. We have been so lucky thus far. It is amazing what we took for granted till it's gone!

This area is badly burnt; once majestic forests are now charred wrecks. Drenched by rain, we make a hasty camp by Hardwood Creek. Leaving sodden clothes in the vestibules of our tents, we settle into warm sleeping bags.

**Carl:** There is no respite from wetness; it is a one-way street of decline. You go into defence mode; every water particle on dry gear is an alien invader to be resisted!

**Tim:** The ferocity of the front lives up to all the stories I've heard about the South-west's weather, and I am pulled well out of my comfort zone. It seems paradoxical that part of the attraction of this trip is the feeling of being completely enveloped by the elements, yet today my only thoughts are to escape from the cold and wet.

Continuous rain demands a day in our tents reading and talking. The possibility of going home by way of Greystone Bluff vanishes with the rising rivers. An afternoon toilet stop reveals a creek that last night had been a trickle and is now a torrent, metres wide and deep—dangerously close to flooding our campsite! A sodden late-afternoon walk moves us to higher ground before we return to our sleeping bags.

We have always had concerns about crossing the Hardwood and Davey Rivers, but had not foreseen issues with Hardwood Creek! Early scouting the next day reveals a log that might be used to cross the torrent. Gingerly Tim crosses the log, followed by Carl and me. One crossing down, two to go. Getting to the Hardwood River is straightforward over



burnt button grass. Pools of water spread out from the flooded river on to the plains. An hour of scouting in intermittent rain suggests a possible crossing point. A small plastic lilo is inflated and some rope stretched across the river. Tim again acts as the guinea pig. Paddling furiously, he manages to keep rucksack, lilo and body together while swimming feverishly to get to the other side. A safe landing, the rope used to return the lilo and soon Carl and I are also over. Two down, one to go.

Burnt remnants of river scrub feel like prison bars as we struggle from the river. Then it is button grass to the junction of the Davey and Frankland Rivers, rain squalls creating an eerie atmosphere. A tired team reaches the Davey. Miraculously, the fire stopped just before the beautiful forest lining the river. A majestic green forest canopy frames the massive bulk of water streaming down the river.

We make camp: we hope the river will go down overnight.



## Day nine

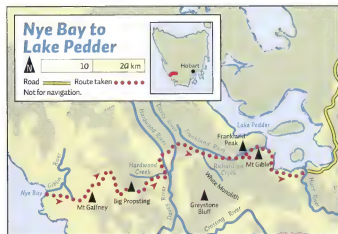
The river drops 15 centimetres overnight but remains awesome. Again we throw the rope across and Tim pioneers the crossing, returning the small lilo for the next person. I take it too slowly and nearly overshoot. Carl does it with ease. The third major river crossing is behind us. A celebration, then we climb on to Long Ridge, back into burnt country and bad weather. Lunch is had as another front rushes through, bringing mist, rain and howling wind. An hour later it suddenly clears, revealing the Remote Range on one side, the White Monoliths on the other, the Frankland River below.

**Carl:** I am always very affected by visual aesthetics. This sudden clearing and new light on the river and mountains really lifts me, just as scrub-bashing has the reverse effect!

Down to a still swollen Richardson Creek, a careful wade and we make camp near its junction with the Frankland. Torn between a sheltered but flood-prone campsite by the creek and a less sheltered one on button grass on higher ground, we let caution win the day!

## Day ten

Reaching Lake Pedder from the Frankland River involves traversing several long ridges towards Jones Pass, with some bad scrub on the way. A couple of hours to go a few hundred metres—we feel we are getting nowhere. Why do I not remember this scrub from 30 years ago? Maybe I had more energy then!



**Tim:** In the scrub I langed for a hat blast of central Australian sunshine. I've never seen algae growing on trees before in such a wet and cold environment.

To distract us as we climb the final ridge to the pass, we plan a theoretical descent of a waterfall and canyon off the Ragged Range. More scrub means a late camp at 7:30 pm, complicated by a lack of water. A plastic pipe helps draw water from rain-filled yabbie holes. As evening falls, the clouds break up and a fantastic sunset provides a reward for one of the hardest days of the trip.

## Day 11: Lake Pedder

We start today with a celebratory dash up Mt Giblin. As we climb, several lakes in the Frankland Range appear underneath the majestic Frankland and Right Angle Peaks. On the other side the Ragged Range lives up to its name!

**Tim:** Mt Giblin was one of those top-of-the-world places. Kilometres from any road, I was inspired by a sticker I'd seen once: 'get real, get nude!' The rocky vantage point, the adrenalin of the cold air—I couldn't not take its advice to really feel the moment.

From Mt Giblin it is straight down into Pebbly Creek. Under a rock Tim discovers an animal's lair complete with bones, remnants of a past meal. What could have lived there?

In the creek valley the vegetation is again thick and unwelcoming. In complete frustration we try walking in the creek itself, clambering down the bouldery creek, imagining we are floating on lilies. At day's end we reach the Pedder shoreline. The moment is marked by several spectacular rainbows. A dusk swim is followed by a night of celebration on the shoreline.

Though I could never greet this version of Lake Pedder with enthusiasm, it is great to have got there. And one of the other guys had never heard of the old lake! We must remain vigilant!

**Tim:** About when I was born, this was a place of much struggle and controversy. Not having experienced it first hand, to hear the history from someone involved provided me with good insights into the philosophy of wilderness.

## Day 12: home

Our last day and the uncertainty of what is involved in walking the shoreline is answered: a lot of mud, interspersed with many beautiful bays. The weather brings rain and sunshine in a confused, erratic mix. Walking



Satisfied at the end of a hard day, the Davey basin. Johnston **Left**, a close examination of the vegetation was often necessary.

is made faster by the anticipation of finishing, mingled with sadness at leaving this majestic world that has been home for a fortnight.

We walk up on to Red Knoll and around to the Huon camping ground in the cold rain and wind, to be greeted by a friendly bus driver complete with dry bus. The first people in a fortnight.

## Making connections

As we write, it feels far away. Some of the pain and hard work has faded in our memories, becoming the stuff of adventure. The satisfaction remains. Places like this are just so important.

**Tim:** I have always dreamt of climbing Federation Peak—a goal of mine is to have a cup of tea on a top—but untracked country, making your own way, not seeing anyone for two weeks, I think it has spoilt me. I felt the trip was a great physical and mental challenge. At different times there was plenty to be anxious about. But I managed to keep on top of my thoughts and deal with whatever we encountered. In the end everything happens between your ears.

**Tim:** I did this trip partly to experience a part of Australia I did not know. The desire to explore is an inescapable part of me. Now that I have seen a small part of South-west Tassie, the Kimberleys are calling. I was interested in the challenge of being self-sufficient for more than a few days, surviving outside my comfort zone, balancing staying dry and warm with keeping weight manageable. Generally I found the trip more comfortable than I expected.

**Peter:** I find it an amazing, life-giving experience to feel small in an unspilt land, a great way to get perspective spiritually. I am conscious of my own diminishing reserves of energy, my time for enjoying this great wilderness is running out. Part of this journey has been to say goodbye to sacred places from times past, to reconnect, to be glad and sad at the same time. To see them with older eyes is to appreciate them more, savouring them for what they are, not just for the adventure. The west coast connection over the Propostings has added to the richness and colour I take with me on life's journey.

I appreciate the energy of youth; we take it far granted till it's gone!

I also came to appreciate again the importance of the different strengths and gifts people bring to making a great team. Carl and Tim could not have done this trip without my experience or planning. I could not have done it without their energy, great bush skills, resilience and willingness to put up with an ageing companion. **W**

Peter Kador has spent a lifetime travelling remote wilderness areas, and initiated his wife-to-be to bushwalking with a two-week walk to Diamond Peak. Involved in leadership development, he has a passion to help people make a difference with their lives.



# Meandering down the Murray

**Andrew Davison goes on an epic six-month, 2500 kilometre paddle from the source of the Murray River to the Southern Ocean**

FROM A SERIES OF SOAKS BENEATH A TEA-TREE THICKET DEEP WITHIN the Snowy Mountains emerges a slow trickle of water. Bubbling from the dense undergrowth, it appears as a narrow stream running across grassy plains; the stream is easily straddled and the water is sweet to drink. Continuing its journey, it rapidly gains momentum, leaping over rocks and diving into pools. It continues to gain life with its descent before it breaks through fields of green, where weeping willow branches touch the water's surface and a bridge is needed to cross it. Here the Murray River carries enough water to launch a well-laden Canadian-style canoe.

Leah and I had both been captivated by the romance of the Murray since family camping trips when we were children. These introduced us to the scent of smouldering eucalyptus campfires, the raucous cries of flocks of cockatoos and the sight of gentle afternoon light stretching

between the canopies of ancient river red gums. These momentous excursions inspired a detailed exploration of the Murray and its habitats.

## **The Beginning: the upper Murray**

There are no rapids but the water is swift below the confluence of the Murray and Swampy Plains Rivers. Without any great canoeing skills we careered through unsettling eddies and beneath dense willow branches, just missing numerous snags. Saving us from disaster was the stability of our wide, overloaded tub, which we affectionately dubbed *The Wallaby*.

The cold night had left a crust of ice on *The Wallaby* and on the fly of our tent, but the coals of our fire from the previous night still glowed red. A handful of dry eucalyptus leaves smouldered before bursting into flames, ready to warm aching fingers and boil a brew. The distant moan of milking cows amused us as we launched our canoe into the edge of the Murray before being swept away in its swift grasp.

Weeping willows lined the river's banks, while the cold mist of the winter's morning spilled lazily across the surrounding flood plains. We were only 250 metres above sea level, at the base of the ranges that are home to Australia's biggest mountains. From here it was 2500 kilometres to the Southern Ocean, where the Murray trickles over a sandbar and meets the constant breaking of endless waves.



Across stagnant reaches and swirls and rushes of murky water, we continued to weave through lush pastures, the flood plains of the upper Murray. Rain that fell during the first week fed the streams and thirsty slabs of clay. It filled the billabongs that dotted the plains, but the Murray did not break its banks. We were paddling through the middle of the third year of a continuing drought. It needed more rain for that to happen.

The rains drew out the rich scents of upper Murray life. As we clambered up eroded banks, earth and cow dung clung to our shoes. Camp was typically found beside a string of willow trees with grazing cows milling about and the occasional bull unsettling us with a stare. For days the rains dissolved the horizon, but as the weather cleared the warmth of the sun's rays penetrated the scattered cumulus clouds.

A whistling kite banked and swooped through the raking light and clear air. Its vigorous, distinctive whistle would follow us for the next six months. The birds on the Murray added to its tranquil charm. Mornings were filled with the nattering of songbirds. Throughout the relaxing days of silently gliding across the polished river's surface, their presence filled the air. On a quiet approach, a flock of coots scurried across the water's surface, darting to the safety of a thicket of reeds, while watchful cormorants perched on a log, wings stretched, bathing in the sun.



As gums replaced willows, the river took on a healthier glow and birds flourished. However, the Improved health of the river was short-lived. As we entered the empty expanse of the Hume Weir, dead stumps protruded from the drowned earth and at last we came upon the wall that holds the water.

### **Impounding features and fertile plains**

The volume of water below the massive cement structure of the Hume Weir was little more than a trickle, scarcely enough to carry *The Wallaby* over the occasional shoals and banks of sand. The river had a certain odour and warning signs informed residents of the blue-green algae that plague this section of the river.

It is the demand for water—the life-giving force that allows agriculture to thrive in the arid regions downstream—that has the winter rains and the spring thaw impounded here for

The author and Leah O'Neil enjoying a freezing morning on the upper Murray.

**Top**, Leah directing *The Wallaby* to the base of one of the many cliffs along the Murray.

**Main photo**, a beautiful misty Murray sunrise.

All photos by the author

later allocations. It also caused the slow drag we experienced below the weir, past the industrial estate of Albury–Wodonga.

Nevertheless, a few kilometres on, the water appeared deeper, the red gum forest thickened and these bountiful surroundings displayed an abundance of life: finches frolicked for seeds, and flocks of swimming pelicans darted their heads under water, trapping fish in their large pouches. A wedge-tailed eagle rose and circled in the sky. The *Wallaby* now glided almost effortlessly over the pea-coloured waters until we arrived on the stagnant backwaters of Lake Mulwala.

This broad basin holds water for irrigating the vast plains that surround it, stretching into the arid regions to the north and the Murray valley to the south. Above the weir, open earth channels direct the water at a rate of up to 10 000 megalitres a day through almost 3000 kilometres of channels irrigating more than 7500 square kilometres.

Below the ten steel floodgates that impound the waters of Lake Mulwala, the red gum forests thicken and the flood plains extend for hundreds of metres from the river's banks. At a glance they appear in a pristine state and, compared with the plains upstream, they are. The water impounded by the Hume Weir and Lake Mulwala usually inundates the roots of the ancient red gums on these plains, raising mats of floating debris and triggering a frenzy of breeding. It would also fill the billabongs, while the flood plains would become a rich feeding ground for birds. Although these seasonal floods still regularly occur, the flood lands of the Murray rarely benefit from them now. Instead, the water inundates fields of monoculture hundreds of kilometres from the river's banks. The area is still a rich feeding ground, but primarily for human consumption.

With the earth of the plains cracking and the billabongs receding, the birds and wildlife were concentrated along the banks of the Murray. An azure kingfisher bobbed on a branch above the water before swooping and snatching a small fish swimming close to the surface. The whistling kite was spotted again, sweeping and banking through the afternoon light. Fish rose to the river's surface, sending rings rippling away, while with the gentle splash of a paddle the *Wallaby* glided across the calm waters.

### Sandbanks, steamers and red gums

The river continued its slow, twisting course, forming large drifting arches and leaving deposits of golden sand on the inside banks. The occasional resilient gum provided shade and the soft, clean sands offered countless pleasant campsites. At night the air, moist with dew, flickered in the light of the fire as small bats slept above the sky. From the dark shadows of the surrounding forests the 'Skeowk!' of the nufous night heron and the eerie accelerating cry of the nightjar brought a crispness to the damp, clear night.

The tang of wood smoke and steam filled the morning air, and the burst of a whistle roused us from a sleepy morning tea around the campfire. The whistle blew again, upsetting flocks of screeching corellas and sulphur-crested cockatoos. Rounding the bend, the *Emmylou* came chugging upstream.

Paddle steamers were first used on the Murray in 1853 when two of them, the *Mary Ann* and the *Lady Augusta*, raced to the Murray–Darling junction. The *Lady Augusta* won the £2000 prize but the *Mary Ann* opened trading to the numerous fledgling settlements along the river's banks. Quickly the river became a major highway into the interior of Australia, supplying primitive settlements with rations and mail, and transporting bales of wool and other goods to the markets of the major cities. With the paddle steamers came the development of towns and ports, and in 1865 Echuca's wharf was constructed. That the wharf once stood 332 metres long and three storeys high is testimony to better times.

Nearly 140 years later, Leah and I sat eating lunch on the restored wharf with my 87-year-old grandmother. We listened as she reminisced about growing up in Echuca at a time when horse-drawn carts still plied the streets and the town was beginning its rapid decline.

'In the old days Echuca had over a hundred hotels, and the old town had lots of brothels. Mum didn't like us going to the old port; it was pretty rough, but we would never tell her.' She pointed out ritzy restaurants that

were once hard-working brothels, the church in which she was married, old workplaces and her primary school: 'I never learnt much, but I went there.'

We slowly strolled through the streets until we came once again back to the wharf—the 'old town', she would call it: 'This part of town was a dive, but now it is all jazzed up with tourists.' Her great-grandfather cut sleepers and posts: 'He really was good at it. He was above average, he'd cut just as smoothly as a fence post of today.' Today red gum logs are still cut into sleepers, although chainsaws have replaced the axe. The



forests of the past were decimated partly to satisfy the needs of timber-hungry steamers. Logging is now somewhat controlled to ensure the sustainability of the forest and the protection of habitat. However, sustainability is open to interpretation when four sawmills, six sleeper cutters and 12 commercial firewood collectors have economic interests in the small patch of surrounding state forest that is Gunbower Island, not to mention the scores of private wood collectors. (The situation has changed since the time of writing, parts of the Gunbower are being made into a national park and from June this year only one sawmill will be operating for the next five years, although whether or not this is sustainable is still in question as the forest rarely floods these days.)

We steamed further on down the river. We were aware that we were paddling through the largest river red gum forest in the world, but it was difficult to appreciate this from the vantage point of the *Wallaby*. We were now paddling on muddy water in a deep cut between steep clay banks up to five metres high. However, the occasional gently sloping sandy bend gave easy access to the vast red gum forest.

Of the almost 5000 square kilometres of river red gums along the Murray and its tributaries, almost half are managed as state forest—like Gunbower Island, where many regal gums stand. Some reach 50 metres in height and are more than 500 years old. Gnarled red gums are as much a part of the Murray as the water that runs between its banks. In the misty mornings, which shroud the knotted trunks of the ancient gums, their hollows and openings come alive with the abundance of the wildlife they shelter. The importance of the gums to the health of the river and plains is comparable to that of the regular flooding that once naturally occurred.

### Oasis in the desert

Eight hundred kilometres from the port of Echuca, the semi-arid region of Hattah–Kulkyne National Park is a landscape of windswept sand dunes, low mallee scrub and fertile flood plains. Here, floodwaters rise and fill a series of lakes, bringing life to the region. The flood plains and lakes of the park, along with several other sites along the Murray, are recognised under the Ramsar Convention as being of international importance. They contain more diversity of plant and animal life than the Murray channel itself. Breeding fish flourish in the warm, shallow waters, and birds flick through branches of the red gum forests; more than 200 species have been identified within the park's boundaries.



As we paddled through, migrating birds were beginning to arrive from the north to reap the benefit of the rich wetlands. A noisy flash of smoky yellow whizzed through the tree branches—the graceful flight of the rare regent parrot. High in a dead tree by our camp was a precariously perched, straggly stick nest: the home of a whistling kite, which watched attentively for prey from its lofty perch.

Mildura was founded on the water that the Murray brings and that feeds the thirsty crops and orchards which are the basis of the area's wealth. The

by the expanse of the lake. It was a daunting view, a small barrier between us and our goal—the mouth of the Murray. The shore of the lake was the only safe course; the curls of white foam that tailed into the distance and covered the lake's surface would have sunk *The Wallaby* in minutes. We struck out close to the shore. Gulls hovered in the gusty wind, their beady eyes curi-



region's average annual rainfall is a low 250–330 millimetres. The sunburnt mallee sands quickly absorb this, making the Murray's supply invaluable.

### Coming to an end

With sunrise came the raucous screeches of galahs, corellas and cockatoos and the various bleeps, chirps and tweets of the smaller finches, honey-eaters, chats, rosellas, lorikeets and parrots. A pied cormorant scanned the river for food from a handy perch as we launched *The Wallaby* beneath the 100 metre high cliffs of the Murray River gorge. The ochre-red cliffs radiated the morning's warmth. The extensive flood plains further upstream were a thing of the past; the river's course was now dictated by the confining cliffs. Billabongs still dotted the river's edge below the cliffs; some of these were islands impounded by cliffs and the river. Wildlife abounded in these relatively protected areas. Kangaroos bounded away as we strolled amongst the great stands of gums surrounding the billabongs.

At the town of Morgan the river doglegged south. This became a defining feature, a milestone—it was the homeward stretch, the final dash to the sea. We were feeling strong. We had now been paddling *The Wallaby* for five months and over 2000 kilometres. However, we were not tiring of the Murray: its constant changes, its stories, its tranquil charm and its bird life still mesmerised us. The river changed once again when it turned south: the reaches were broad, stagnant pools of choppy water. The banks were lined with the lush, green branches of weeping willow, and the warmer weather brought out the leisure seekers. In a moment of silence amid the almost ever-present roar of ski boats and jet skis, we could hear the beak of a rainbow bee-eater snap as it grabbed at an insect hovering above the water's surface.

Rounding the final bend of the Murray, we battled a gusty headwind. Mist and spray obscured the view and the choppy grey waters of Lake Alexandrina merged into a bruised sky. The pea-coloured river was swallowed

From left to right, the sun rises over dead stumps protruding from the drowned earth around their camp on the Hume Dam. A rickety old bridge over the upper Murray at Towong. A flock of pelicans on the banks of Lake Alexandrina. Negotiating one of eleven locks along the Murray.

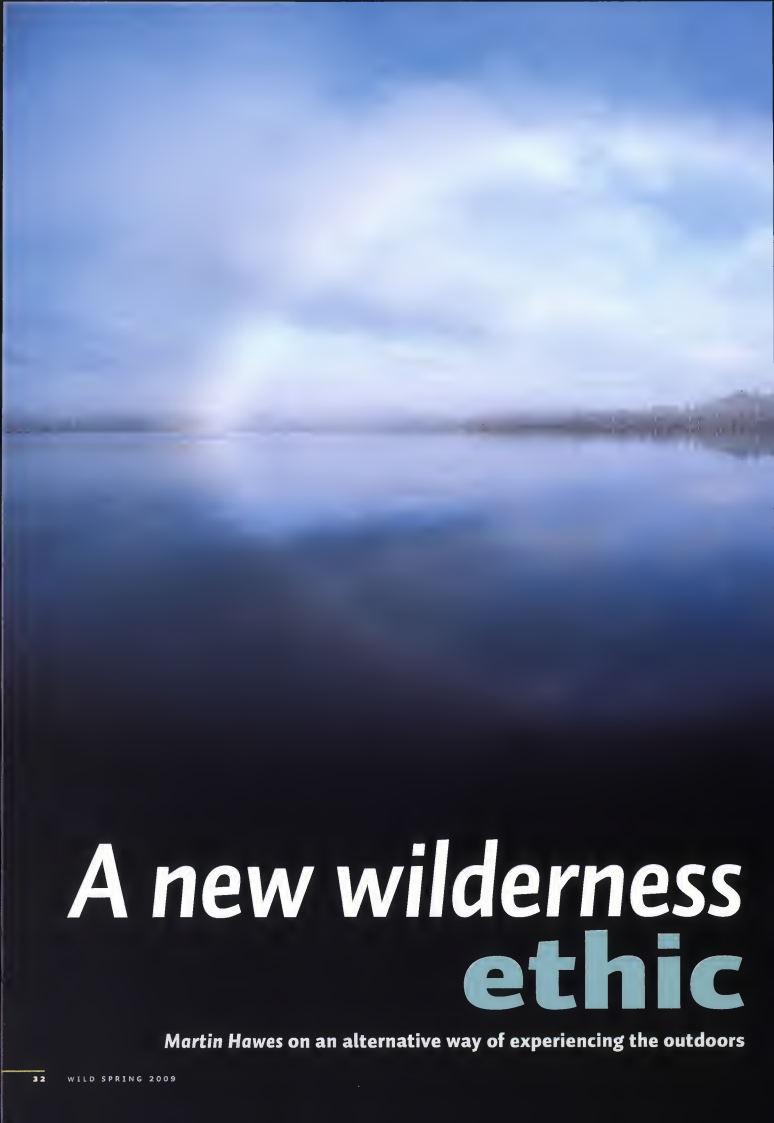
ously monitoring our awkward situation, and a pair of whiskered terns glided and dive-bombed the dark waters. Little black cormorants started from their roost filled the air, a net of flapping wings so large that dark shadows shaded *The Wallaby*.

After a day on the lake, we reached Tauwichee barrage, an eight kilometre wall impounding the waters of the Murray for the last time. This final manipulation of the Murray's course successfully separates fresh water from salt water. After a short portage, we slipped into the long, shallow, saline lagoon of the Coorong. Salt and sea swirled in the wind as we paddled close to the beaches and found a small cove shaded by a forest of casuarinas. From here we set out on foot for the 40 kilometre return walk to the Murray mouth.

Crossing the dunes of Youngusband Peninsula, the finger of sand that separates the Coorong from the ocean, we startled emus, passed ancient middens and climbed dunes 30 metres high until we came to the beach. Shrouded in sea mist, the beige strip of sand stretched to the hazy horizon and beyond. We found ourselves standing on the banks of the Murray where it trickles into the sea. It is a dismal sight, a distressed river fraught and besieged. Mechanical pumps dredge the mouth 24 hours a day. After carving a deep mark across 2500 kilometres of Australia's interior, giving life to parched lands and supporting an abundance of wildlife, the Murray, now frail, hobbles to the ocean. It is a desperate river that needs urgent help. 🌊

Andrew Davison has clear memories of climbing Mount Olsen Bagge when he was seven, planting the seed for a life devoted to walking. This passion has taken him to far-flung corners of the globe: from the high mountains of Central Asia to the arid expanses of the Sahara desert. However, it is the remote trackless areas of the Australian wilderness that he enjoys most.

*In a moment of silence amid the almost ever-present roar of ski boats and jet skis, we could hear the beak of a rainbow bee-eater snap as it grabbed at an insect hovering above the water's surface.*



# *A new wilderness* **ethic**

*Martin Hawes on an alternative way of experiencing the outdoors*



*'In the silence of deep night and in the quiet still morning when the sun is tauching the hills, there is a great mystery. It is there in all living things. If you sit quietly under a tree you would feel the ancient Earth with its incomprehensible mystery. On a still night when the stars are clear and close, you would be aware of expanding space and the mysterious order of all things, of the immeasurable and of nothing, of the movement of the dark hills and the hoot of an owl. In that utter silence of the mind this mystery expands without time and space.'*

J Krishnamurti

WHEN TENZING NORGAY AND EDMUND HILLARY returned from their 1953 assault on Mt Everest, having in Hillary's laconic phrase 'knocked the bastard off', they were swept away by an avalanche of media interviews and public engagements. Everyone in the world, it seemed, was captivated by the news of their momentous achievement. Well, almost everyone. In the tiny village of Tengboche, near the expedition's base camp, the acting abbot could only bring himself to congratulate them far 'nearly reaching the summit of Qomolangma (the local name for Everest)'.

I remember feeling quite annoyed when I first read that anecdote in expedition leader

John Hunt's official account of the ascent. I was only a teenager at the time and was partial to 'knocking off' peaks myself. Like millions of others I admired Tenzing and Hillary and was inspired by what they had achieved. I'd heard that mountains were sacred to the Nepalese people and that there were taboos against climbing some of them. But there was no sanction against climbing Everest, and the expedition had been approved by the Nepalese government. Denying its success seemed stiff-necked and mean-spirited on the part of the abbot.

But I now think the old monk might have meant something else. Yes, Tenzing and Hillary had reached the highest physical point on the mountain. But had they perhaps missed something? In their eagerness to achieve their secular goal, had they overlooked another, less tangible summit? Had they seen the face of the mountain that cannot be tamed with pitons and ropes or conquered by planting a maypole of flags? Had they learnt all that the mountain had to teach—not just the lessons of courage and endurance, invaluable though these undoubtedly are, but the subtler lessons of silence, connection, exultation, humility, awe? Had they acknowledged the beauty, the mystery, indeed the sacredness of Qomolangma? And if not there, on the heights of the planet's greatest mountain—Qomolangma means 'Mother Goddess of the Earth'—where will humans learn to appreciate the spiritual greatness of the natural world?

I don't wish to detract from the achievement of the 1953 expedition or to suggest that its members were disrespectful of the mountain. In deference to Tibetan and Nepalese sensibilities John Hunt declined to talk about the 'conquest' of Everest, preferring to use the word 'ascent'. For their part, Tenzing and Hillary refused to be drawn on the question of which one of them had reached the summit first, insisting that their achievement had been a cooperative effort.

But the abbot's remark raises important questions—questions that are as vital today as they were half a century ago. Indeed, they are more pressing today, when we are faced with the collapse of the natural systems on which the health of our planet depends. What is this marvellous thing we call 'Earth', and what is our relationship to it? Is the natural world merely a resource for us to consume, through recreation or otherwise? Beyond making money, climbing mountains, procreating and watching TV, what is the purpose of our lives?

The natural world can, I believe, help us to find answers to these questions, or at least help us discover a state of awareness in which answers can reveal themselves. But for this to happen we need to approach the natural world in the right spirit and frame of mind—not as consumers

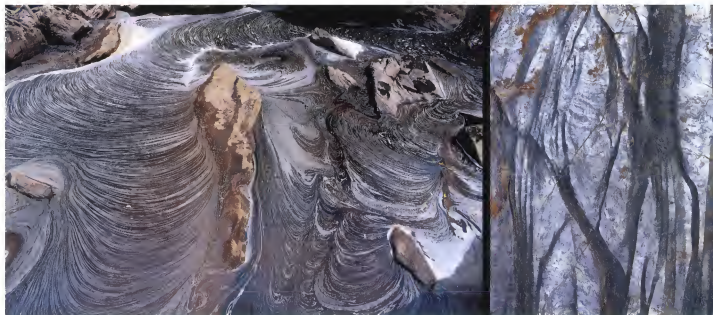
**Left, mistbow over a glacial lake, Central Highlands, Tasmania. All photos by the author**

or would-be conquerors but with openness and humility, as one might approach a great teacher. Indeed, the natural world is one of life's greatest teachers, if we know how to learn from it.

You may have some sense of what I mean if you have ever stood on a high place in wilderness and felt your thoughts swept away by the majesty and beauty of the landscape before you.

Walk in a forest and it is overwhelmingly clear that there is no division between what is living and what is dead. All things are in a constant state of flux, decay and re-emergence. Time loses its significance, except insofar as it manifests in the miracle of spring or the tranquillity of approaching night. There is no 'progress', only endless transformation. And the truly astounding

somely spectacular place where glaciers come right down to the sea. One day he was walking along the deck of a cruise ship when he heard an ominously familiar noise coming from behind one of the doors. He opened it—and there were dozens of people playing poker machines. For them, numbers and money held greater allure than one of the most beautiful landscapes on Earth.



For a few minutes, or perhaps only for a fleeting moment, you might have sensed the pulsing heartbeat of creation; sensed the immense, teeming silence in which life evolved for billions of years before the human mind emerged.

Or perhaps you have sat by a tam in the quietness of a fading day and felt the presence of the land around you, not as a backdrop to your thoughts, not as inert matter, not as scenery, but as a living being, sentient and aware. And surely you have felt the primal delight in the swoop of a bird, seen the magnificence of an ocean coastline shimmering in sunlit spray? Such experiences are not merely aesthetic; they contain deep lessons about life, time, awareness, death.

We spend most of our lives in our thoughts or in environments that thought has contrived. Thought has created the cities, the cars, the traffic lights, the traffic jams. Thought has created the idea of 'progress' and strategies for achieving it. Thought has divided life into 'me' and 'not me', and tries fruitlessly to resolve the insecurity that this division creates. Thought creates a mental world, a world in which we struggle to live—and that is the source of our difficulties, because we don't see that this world is imaginary.

Part of the value of wilderness is that it is a place that thought has not colonised and exploited for its own ends. Hence it is a place where, if we are alert, we can experience a state of awareness beyond the divisions that thought creates. Look at that mountain across the valley. Where does the valley end and the mountain begin? The question has no meaning because it arises only in the realm of thought. In truth there is no 'mountain', no 'valley'; there is only a continuous sweep of being/not-being that the thinking mind divides and categorises for its utilitarian ends.

and humbling thing is that all this is happening by itself, without human design or intervention. There is no management committee, no five-year plan, no bearded 'creator' in the sky. Billions before human beings evolved, life was exploding and unfolding in unimaginable complexity. In wilderness it is still doing so, unconcerned with human affairs.

What is a mountain? This may seem a foolish question, because we all 'know' what mountains are—or think we know. We have pictures of mountains in our heads, so that when we see mountains we recognise them. We think that having a head full of pictures allows us to know the world—but does it? The mountain is living; the picture, dead. You may know what sort of rock a mountain is made of; you may know its name, its height, certain facts about its ecology. But does any of that convey what the mountain actually is?

And how do we love to measure things! The main attraction of Everest is that it is the highest mountain on Earth. In saying this, we are comparing it with other mountains and putting it at the top of the heap, so to speak. Clever monkeys that we are, we have worked out a way of reducing some of the most marvellous entities in creation to a set of numbers on a page—and we think we have discovered something. We then find the numbers at least as interesting as the mountains themselves. If Everest were the seventeenth-highest peak, few of us would have heard of it.

Have you noticed how obsessed we are with numerical extremes—the 'highest' this, the 'southernmost' that? The obsession comes from the apparent power that measuring gives us: the power to explain and dominate, the power to imagine that we are better than others. But one thing it doesn't give us is the power to see. I once met a man who had worked as a guide on cruise ships in Alaska's Glacier Bay, that awe-

Does it matter that we name and measure things? Does it matter that our minds divide the world and build castles of abstraction that we mistake for understanding? It matters immensely because it lies at the heart of our human predicament. We feel ourselves to be separate and alone in a strange and rather alien world, beset by apparent dangers, haunted by fears. We don't realise that the dangers, the fears, even the thing we call 'the world', are all products of our imagination. We are struggling to live in a world of things, places, ideas, goals. This world is barren, imbalanced and inevitably dysfunctional because it is only a fractured image of life.

In the course of history, a small number of individuals have tried to point out that a different way of seeing is possible: a clear, direct and undivided perception free of all confusion and conflict. Lao Tzu said: 'Naming is the origin of all particular things.' Albert Einstein described the sense of separateness that most of us feel as 'a delusion' and 'a kind of prison'. He went on to say: 'Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.' Such teachings are as valid today as they ever were. Indeed, they are vital, because our current mode of thinking and relating to the planet is clearly unsustainable.

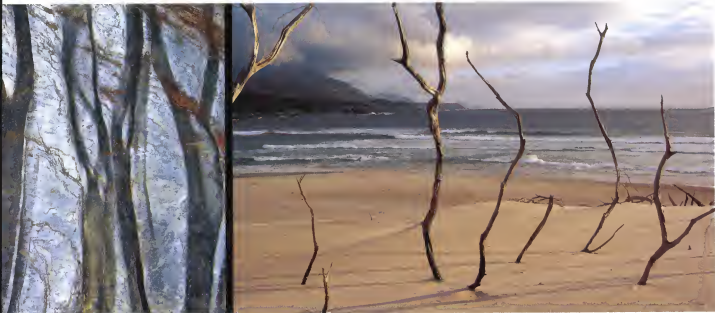
One of the obstacles to changing the way we see is that from the perspective of the state of mind we're in, it is hard to imagine that another way of seeing is possible. Our predicament is like that of a patient who was described by the neurologist and author Oliver Sacks. The patient, an elderly woman, had suffered a kind of neural damage that caused her brain to lose all the information it associated with 'left' before it reached her conscious mind. Not only was she



unable to see or sense things on her left side; she was unable even to conceive of the idea of 'left'. When she tried to eat a plate of food, she would eat everything on the right half of the plate without realising that the food on the left side even existed. When her predicament was pointed out to her, she couldn't comprehend that there was anywhere 'else' for the food to

Going into wilderness brings us into contact with a realm of life that long preceded us and of which ultimately we are a part. It is like visiting an immensely ancient temple where priceless wisdom has been preserved—except that, like wilderness itself, this wisdom is living and evolving. To encounter this wisdom is to realise that the natural world is not a collection of 'land systems'

you set eyes upon will ever be quite the same again. Find time to be quiet, even if this means going off by yourself or inviting your companions to set aside times when there is no conversation. This point is worth emphasising, because social interaction not only absorbs your attention but tends to reinforce the conceptual, anthropocentric mode of consciousness in which most of us spend



be. She was, however, able to see more food if she rotated on her chair through 360°—whereupon she could eat the right half of the food that remained.

It seems to me that we are a bit like that poor woman, except that in our case we have lost (or we unconsciously suppress) almost all awareness of the non-material or immeasurable dimension of life. We have become so absorbed in 'things' and 'action', in measuring and knowing and experiencing and achieving, that we have lost sight of the fact that the glittering structure we call 'reality' is merely an artefact of our imagination. We are completely absorbed in this constructed 'reality'—and the result is the chaos we see all around us. We have lost sight of the simple, liberating truth that there is nothing to be gained or lost, no 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', no 'me' or 'you'. There is only endless, ever-changing 'being', the indivisible immensity of the 'now'. And the natural world can remind us of this. If we are attentive and mindful, going into wild places can be a way of 'turning through 360°' and opening our eyes to the realm of life that we normally overlook.

Specifically, I believe that wilderness journeys—whether easy day trips or two-week expeditions—have the potential to be deeply educational and transformative experiences. To go into wilderness is to forsake the comforts and securities of the built environment and to entrust ourselves to the mercy (and benevolence) of the elements. The physical hardships of wilderness journeys can have a cleansing effect on the mind, simplifying our perspective and focusing our attention on the actuality of the here and now. Immersion in nature realigns the body and the psyche with universal and timeless truths—not least, the truth of our mortality and the miraculous fact that we simply are.

or 'environments', populated by 'survival machines' (as the arch-reductionist Richard Dawkins has described animals). Rather, it is a manifestation of the same life force that courses in our own veins and neural networks. Before searching for intelligence in outer space we would do well to acknowledge, and establish contact with, the non-human intelligence that sustains our planet and on which our own survival depends.

I would like to suggest, then, that the time is ripe to foster a new culture of nature recreation, a culture that recognises the profound role that the natural world can play in awakening our understanding of who and what we are. The germ of such a culture already exists—it is inherent, for example, in the Indigenous idea of going walkabout—but it is not mainstream and it is in danger of being edged out by an ethos that sees life as a series of experiences to be consumed for pleasure, status and self-advancement. I am not suggesting that we need to adopt a formal creed, or that we can't have fun in wilderness (and even bag the odd peak or two). I am simply suggesting that we become aware of the deeper possibilities of nature recreation: that we think about these possibilities, write about them, explore them in our own recreational activities and encourage our children to explore them.


So, before you next head bush, think about what you hope to achieve. If you are determined to reach a goal, at least consider what other 'goals' you might achieve along the way. Accept that your journey could have something profound and unexpected to teach you. Consider how you might pay your respects to the place you are planning to visit—after all, it has been around a lot longer than you, and you will be a guest there.

When you are out in the wilderness, keep your eyes open and your heart alert. Take time to appreciate what is around you, because nothing

**From left to right, foam patterns in a river pool; river rock detail; South-west coastline, Tasmania.**

most of our lives. Make friends with the Earth: it is not your adversary, even at times when your life is in danger. Wherever you are, remember that you are standing on sacred ground.

When you get back from the bush, don't rush back into your routine but try to set aside time to absorb the lessons that wilderness has taught you. Much of what we learn in wilderness touches us subliminally and requires time to settle into the depths of our minds and hearts. If you've been to a remote or trackless area, consider not publicising where you have been, because doing so may deprive other people of the opportunity to have a similar experience. If you've been touched by the beauty and peace of wilderness, consider ways in which you can share something of that experience with other people.

It is no coincidence that many of the world's great spiritual teachers have spent part of their lives in natural places. They have recognised that nature can teach us lessons that are difficult, if not impossible, to learn amidst the bustle and distractions of the human world. Above all, it can help us to see beyond the boundaries with which our thinking minds divide the world—and hence, help us to discover a way of seeing that is free of the illusion of self. We need to discover this way of seeing if our species is to survive into the 22nd century and beyond. We may yet find that Henry Thoreau's declaration 'In wildness lies the preservation of the world' contains a profound and literal truth. 

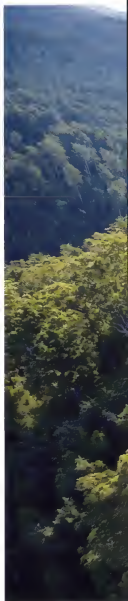
Martin Hawes is a writer and wilderness photographer who has been walking in the Tasmanian wilderness for nearly 40 years. He is currently collaborating on a book about the limitations of thought and the possibility of transforming consciousness.

# Endangered

*Rob Blakers captures the beauty of Tasmania's southern forests: all photos are of areas zoned for logging*











*Clockwise from above, tall wet forest in the Weld Valley. A giant eucalypt found in the Weld Valley. The Florentine Valley from above. A sassafras grove, Weld Valley. Opening spread on previous page, looking over the Styx Valley towards Mt Anne.*

# Backyard Adve walking Mt Dif

**Stawell resident Philip Allison finds adventure close to home in the Gariwerd/Grampians National Park**



# ntures: ficult



NOT SO LONG AGO I WOULD MERRILY HAVE JUMPED IN MY CAR AND driven thousands of kilometres for a bushwalk. In an effort to drop a shoe size or two in the ecological footprint stakes, I now spend more time walking closer to home. And so it was that I decided to forgo the delightful but distant Victorian Alps in favour of the Grampians, a destination no less spectacular but one that I could reach under my own steam.

My wife and baby girl waved goodbye as I strapped my rucksack on to my bicycle and wobbled off into the distance. As I rode beneath a towering canopy of eucalypts along Pleasant Creek, red-rumped parrots scattered at the sound of twigs breaking beneath my wheels. A kangaroo bounded through the bush ahead as spots of rain fell from an unpredictable sky. Changeable weather would sharpen the mountains' mood and increase the chance of finding water after what had been a hot and dry summer. Brown paddocks lined the way, while Lake Lonsdale waited patiently for rain. Once this lake was a great provider for Indigenous



The author looking towards his destination, the Mt Difficult Range, from the nearby Lake Lonsdale. *All uncredited photos by the author. Left, looking north over the flat Wimmera plains from the rocky summit of Mt Difficult.*

Andrew Bain

Djab Wurrung and Jardwadjali people; now even the tourists have disappeared. The dark mass of the Grampians loomed ever nearer. One hundred sheep, each with the same blank expression, observed my passing as I slipped under the cover of Ledcourt State Forest. I negotiated the maze of dirt tracks and soon after—the towering wall of the range dominating the skyline—joined a sandy vehicle track where the vegetation hadn't fallen foul of the axe. Though it was unannounced by signage, I had entered the national park.

After skidding my way along the sandy track I was relieved to reach Roses Gap Road. This road was once part of the overland track between South Australia and the Victorian goldfields. To avoid a ten pound landing tax imposed by Victoria, Chinese miners would land in Robe (in South Australia) and walk to the goldfields, a huge undertaking after the arduous sea voyage. Such endeavours put my own trivial outing into perspective, but did little to reinvigorate my tired legs. I inched into Troopers Creek camping ground, 40 kilometres and five hours after departing home, keen to start the climb to Mt Difficult's summit.

It was 4 pm, later than I would have liked. I considered camping at Troopers Creek and starting early the following morning, but I dearly wanted to witness the sunset from the top. A gentle, sandy track eased me through strands of stringybark and shrubs. Foreboding peaks silently observed the intruder through the forest's canopy, a dark expression upon their western face. The easy walking was short-lived; soon a steep, rocky incline took over. As I twisted through the forested slopes my heart



rate rose with the gain in altitude. To the south-west stood the Asses Ears, where only weeks before I had lain in the sun, gazing out at the flat Wimmera plains 500 metres below.

The track levelled and headed north. The range fell steeply away, Troopers Creek shrinking into the valley below. By now I was thinking about water. I'd banked on finding it in the upper reaches of Tilwinda Falls, and I wasn't disappointed. I downed my pack and clambered through rocks to find the source. Precious water ran in a liquid sheet over the rock and into my waiting container. The day's end was rapidly approaching, the odds of a mountain-top sunset lengthening with the evening shadows. Imposing sandstone cliffs towered above me as I scrambled every which way through bulging rocks. The track climbed again, offering glimpses of the range south. The heavens were working magic with the evening light. I cursed myself for not heading off earlier. Soon I came upon a boulder the size of a small truck; skirting along its side brought me out on to a rocky outcrop with expansive views. As the sun slipped between narrow openings in the sky I frantically set up my camera, hoping to capture this perfect moment before it vanished forever. In my excitement I'd forgotten about reaching camp, but the answer was right before me: the massive boulder formed a natural overhang and would provide a perfect shelter.

I slept reasonably well on the hard ground and woke before dawn—or so I thought. Removing my hat from over my eyes revealed daylight and thick fog. It was nearly 8 am! Mist billowed through cracks in my abode. After porridge I packed up, grateful for the shelter and the fact that I didn't have to fold up a soggy tent. Mist obscured the wider view and focused my attention on the immediate. Ravens called, invisible in the fog. Water clung precariously to leaves, mosses gleamed emerald upon wet rock. I heard voices but no one appeared. Less than 100 metres on, I arrived at the proper campsite, 18 hours late but none the worse for wear. Sheltered from the summit, flat tent sites nestled between rocks and shrubs. The voices I'd heard must have headed off, possibly in the same direction as I was going.

Visibility hadn't improved. Was it worth going to the top given that I'd return to this point tomorrow afternoon? I only had eight kilometres to walk for the whole day, so why not wait a while for it to clear? I dumped my pack and scamped up the final stretch. The wet sandstone provided good grip except where too many boots had worn the surface like old sandpaper. I felt the moist wind on my face as I emerged from the mountain's shelter. Standing like giant chess pieces, a rock cairn and trig point greeted my arrival, along with 360° of grey. I wandered about the rocky ledges and found a place out of the dampening breeze to munch on some scroggin. Tantalising glimpses of mountains came and went between clouds of mist. Bands of wild rock jutted skyward. Languishing on the currents above were a pair of wedge-tailed eagles, monarchs of the mountain. Time suspended, motionless: a tilt of wings, sweeping nearer, then arcing away. Some two hours slipped by, the bustling world forgotten. My leisurely itinerary made the walk more of a meditation than a march. The weather was breaking, the sun's white crown pressing on the thinning cloud. Expanses of land were opening before me. Mt Stapylton was now visible to the north. After the Mt William, Serra and Victoria ranges shrugged off their last layers of mist, the picture was complete.

It was now mid-afternoon. Briggs Bluff beckoned me north. The walking was easy, the track sloping down along a wide shelf beneath the crest of the range. The vegetation changed from the steeper, forested slopes to low shrubs dominated between ribs of rock. April isn't the best time of year for wildflowers in the Grampians, but I was greeted by the red bells of the common correa and flame heath. By late afternoon I'd arrived at Mud Hut Creek, which was sheltered from the wind and surrounded by wild country. To the east, Deep Creek cuts through the range to meet Mt William Creek hundreds of metres below. Drops of rain punctured my reverie. Undeterred, I left my pack at camp and set off for Briggs Bluff. Robert Briggs was a former East India Army captain turned squatter. Droving stock south from the Murrumbidgee in New South Wales to the Port Phillip market in Melbourne, he arrived to find the market overstocked. Heading north again, he crossed the Pyrenees, eventually squatting on 80 000 hectares of country surrounding the Bluff in 1840.

I passed over low cliffs and crossed the dry upper reaches of Mud Hut Creek to arrive at a junction. Like other junctions it was marked with a map, making navigation almost foolproof. Gliding over the open terrain, I raced the darkening skies pursuing me. I was soon scaling the final rock slope to stand alone upon the 619 metre peak. Mt Stapylton stood to the north-west, looking like a dilapidated haunted house in the gloomy light. I peered over the cliff edge, staring through the void at the tiny trees of the forest below. Beyond this token gesture of greenery was cleared



farmland, burnt yellow and brown as far as the eye could see. I set up the camera to photograph the darkening skies over Mt Difficult. Breathing the cool, damp air, I surveyed this powerful scene one last time before slipping on my raincoat and retracing my steps to camp.

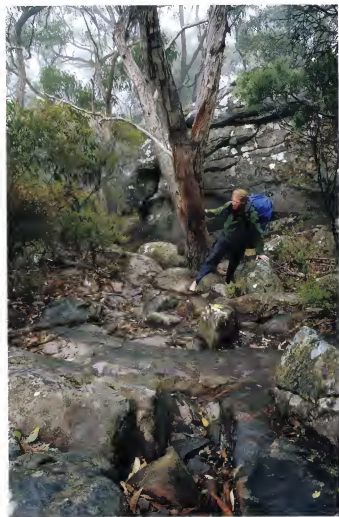
My tent seemed even smaller than usual after the previous night's spacious overhang. I closed my eyes, only to see the rocky landscape etched in the darkness. Gentle rain, amplified inside my cocoon, lulled me to sleep.

I woke to the sound of insects. I like to guess the weather before I open the tent door. Buzzing insects suggested solar activity, and I unzipped the door expecting clear skies and the sun peering over the range; a leaden mist was the reality. I tried to light the stove for a warming cup of tea. After resisting five attempts, the fuel finally accepted its fate and breakfast was under way. Seconds later I blew out the flame and ran off down the track, camera in hand, for a better look at the golden light spilling beneath the mist towards me. I grabbed a photo just before the curtain closed.

After the usual morning fare I rolled up my wet tent and sauntered down the track in search of water. I found a still pool at the headwaters of Deep Creek. Was it safe to drink? It seemed to support various life forms so why



not me? I took my chances and headed off, appreciating the water but not the extra weight. The route ahead appeared improbable. Tremendous geological upheaval seemed to have left me a giant's step beneath the crest of the range. Climbing steeply, blood pumping, I zigzagged higher. Majestic grass trees and windswept caves tempted me to rest. A narrow canyon led me to the top of the range, a new vista before my eyes. Under scattered clouds I sat with the map and compass, identifying the distant peaks stretching to the horizon.



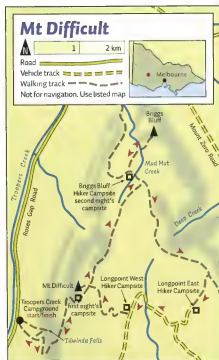
After lunch the path descended into forest again. The walking was so pleasant along the forested tops that I would gladly have walked all the way south to Halls Gap, but it was time to descend the range towards Mackenzie Creek. The vegetation thinned to reveal a shimmering Lake Wartook, cradled between the mountains. It was dammed in the 1880s, turning a swampy basin into a reservoir. Wartook is a corruption of the Jardwadjali word *werdug*, meaning 'ancestor's shoulder'. Mt Difficult was known as *gor*, meaning 'nose-like'. This is how the Jardwadjali would have described the origins of the mountains surrounding them. Thirty-two sites used by the Jardwadjali for a range of activities from tool-making to food preparation were discovered when Lake Wartook was drained for maintenance in 1997.

The track morphed into a four-wheel-drive track and I ploughed straight into a spider's web. This amazing structure spanned the track before I came bumbling along. Its chief engineer was a whopping nine centimetres in length. After explaining the dangers inherent in building a web in such a location, I marched on, passing Long Point East camp to join the Long Point fire track. By mid-afternoon I'd got over my 'brush with death' and was sitting amongst lush green ferns with cool water trickling past. Butterflies danced in the sun as I tasted the sweet water.

At the Long Point West camp I departed from the fire line for the steep slog back up to Mt Difficult. Following a shaded gully loaded with ferns I pushed on, relishing the prospect of sunset from the summit. By 4 pm I'd reached the bush camp, with several hours to relax before sunset—a rare luxury. The leisurely stroll to the top was in pleasant contrast to the

first night's mad dash, and once again I stood alone to witness nature's splendour. A kaleidoscope of colour slowly faded to darkness before burning white stars shepherd the night till dawn.

By morning I'd made a firm decision to invest in an inflatable sleeping mat. I rose in a cold, clear dawn to scale the mountain one last time. The



...once again I stood alone to witness nature's splendour. A kaleidoscope of colour slowly faded to darkness before burning white stars shepherd the night till dawn.



sun appeared on the horizon, looking like a cherry on a massive cake.

As I descended the mountain I met a tourist from the Czech Republic who was running the entire length of the walk in one day, equipped with little more than a small bottle of water—the ultimate in fast and light. On returning to Troopers Creek, I was somewhat disappointed to find two wheels waiting for me and not four, but reflected that it was much better than finding just one! As I rolled through the dry, struggling landscape, I knew it would need much more than one bicycle trip to reverse our impact on the earth but took heart from the fact that I was not alone. 🚲

Philip Allison has tramped in New Zealand and taken the high road to Scotland. When he's not 'gone walkabout' in the Great Southern Land he dreams of trekking in Nepal.

The author preparing breakfast beneath his rocky shelter after the first night.

Left, negotiating the track up to the summit of Mt Difficult in damp weather.

Far left, the sun setting on the ridgeline of the Mt Difficult Range, on a clear day at sunset for a very brief period of time the cliffs glow pink.

# The Coast Walk

**Anna Warr** outlines a walk so close to Sydney that you can access it by public transport, making it perfect for the 'carbon conscious' bushwalker

THE COAST WALK IN SOUTH SYDNEY'S ROYAL National Park is the perfect weekend escape for Sydneysiders with a love of the outdoors. It encompasses everything from spectacular sandstone cliffs, coastal heathland and secluded beaches to palm jungles, rock pools and a wide variety of plant and animal life. It's hard to believe that this biologically diverse slice of coastline is only 32 kilometres from the centre of Australia's largest city. And the best part is that it is entirely accessible by public transport.

The Coast Walk spans the 26 kilometres of coastline between Bundeena and Otford, and can be accessed by train and ferry. It can be done over one or two days, depending on how much time you want to spend exploring or swimming. There is no shortage of places to stop at—beautiful beaches, lookouts and cultural heritage sites can be found at every turn. On the other hand, the walk can be done in around seven hours for those who wish complete it in one day.

## **When to go**

This walk can be done at any time of the year. In summer it can get quite hot walking along the exposed clifftop sections of the track, but this is easily fixed by taking a dip in the ocean or a freshwater swimming hole.

## **Safety/warnings**

Note that many of the beaches along this track are not patrolled. Bear this in mind if you are not a strong swimmer.

## **Maps**

The Central Mapping Authority produces an excellent map at a scale of 1:30 000 titled *Royal National Park*. While the track is very clearly defined for most of the walk, it is worth having this map as it denotes sites of cultural significance as well as specific plant and animal life that may be found in particular areas.

## **Permits**

Camping permits are \$5 per night for an adult and \$3 per night for a child. You can pay this over the phone by calling the Royal National Park camping office on (02) 9542 0683 (open 10.30 am to 1.30 pm, Monday to Friday). Your permit will then be posted to you.

## **Access**

The beauty of this walk is that it is so easy to access by public transport. Catch a train and a ferry to start the walk from Bundeena. In order to do this, take a train on the Illawarra line to Cronulla. From the station, walk 100 metres down to Gunnamatta Bay, where the ferry departs for Bundeena once an hour, on the half hour. There are different ferry timetables for summer and winter, so it is best to check the Cronulla Ferries web site (<http://cronullaferries.com.au>) for the first and last ferry times.





At the other end of the walk, finish up at Otford railway station. From the official end of the Coast Walk, walk along Lady Wakehurst Drive for about half a kilometre to get to the edge of Otford township. From here, make your way down through the streets of Otford to the bottom of the gully to get to the railway station. Trains depart from Otford every two hours, so be aware of train times if you are not keen on waiting at the station for too long. From here, catch a train back to Central station in Sydney to connect with other suburban lines.

### Water

Drinking water can be found at Bundeena and Otford. It is recommended that you carry enough water for the entire walk. Along the track there are a few creeks, but it is not advisable to drink from these due to their proximity to roads and townships.

### Camping

Camping along the Coast Walk is only permitted at North Era camping ground, where only fuel stoves are permitted.

### The walk

After a delightful ferry ride from Gunnamatta Bay to Bundeena Wharf, weave your way through the streets of Bundeena to the official start of the Coast Walk. This can be found on the south-eastern outskirts of the town. For those who feel like making an interesting detour (the track is full of these!), there are some great specimens of Indigenous rock carving on the headland at Jibbon.

From the start of the walk, follow the well-defined track along the tops of the white sandstone cliffs. The coastal heathland vegetation is no higher than chest height here, meaning there are good ocean views for many kilometres along this section of track. This can be a good whale-watching point at certain times of the year.

## The walk at a glance

Grade	Easy/moderate
Length	One day or two short days (recommended)
Distance	26 kilometres (plus a bit of extra walking on roads at the start and finish to access public transport)
Type	A well-marked track that follows some of New South Wales's most beautiful and biologically diverse coastline
Region	Royal National Park, Greater Sydney Region
Nearest towns	Bundeena and Otford
Start, finish	Bundeena Wharf, Otford railway station
Maps	Royal National Park 1:30 000 CMA map
Best time	All year round, although it can get very hot in summer

Panoramic view of the Royal National Park coastline with the North and South Era beaches in the foreground. *Left*, a camper enjoying a fire on a cold night at the North Era camping ground; the glow of Sydney visible in the background. *All photos by the author*

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After about 45 minutes, you will arrive at Big Marley and then Little Marley Beach. The soft sand provides a brief interlude from the cliff-top walking, which recommences on the other side of the beach. A few kilometres on from the Marley beaches is Wattamolla. This is a popular swimming spot in the summer as it has road access. However, during winter or on weekdays, one may be lucky enough to experience this stunning lagoon in relative solitude. If you are keen to finish the walk in one day, resist the temptation to stop here.

On leaving Wattamolla, continue to head to the very top level of the Wattamolla car park and pick up the Coast Walk. Follow the cliff-top track for around 20 minutes to Curracurrang, where there is a beautiful creek and beach inlet lined with palm trees. Once again, this is a lovely place to stop for a rest. From Curracurrang, follow the track for another 20 minutes to Curracurrang. If you keep your eyes peeled, you'll notice a rock formation jutting out of the cliffs that looks like an eagle (aptly named Eagle Rock).

After Curracurrang, follow the track through the heathland for another 2.5 kilometres, where the sweeping coastal views of the southern half of Royal National Park become visible. For the geologists among us, this is a great spot to get an overview of the processes of coastal erosion that have shaped the park's coastline. Shortly after this the track drops away steeply as it meanders its way down the large hill to Garie Beach. From here, the terrain changes significantly. For the next six kilometres, the track moves along beaches and rock shelves in much closer proximity to the ocean. Along the various headlands, you will also notice a few shacks that have been built on the slopes behind the beaches (see box).

## History of the Area

In addition to being a place of immense natural beauty, Royal National Park has a rich cultural heritage that is visible in the remnants of Indigenous and European habitation. The Dharawal people inhabited the park for thousands of years, living from the land and ocean, but they did not survive the pressures of European settlement and disappeared from the area during the 19th century. Our knowledge of these people comes from archaeological investigations and early settler accounts of the area. Rock paintings, axe-sharpening grooves and middens can be found along the Coast Track.

In more recent times, a few energetic European pioneers lugged building supplies around the headlands at Garie and Era to build shacks. These were built between 1910 and 1950, before the Era and Burning Palms areas were incorporated into the national park. From the late 1960s on, the National Parks and Wildlife Service attempted to remove the huts, declaring that when an owner passed on, the shack was to be demolished. However, the shack communities banded together and fought for them to be preserved. The shacks are now heritage listed and are noted for their unique 'Depression architecture'. Their owners and occupants do not live in the shacks, but are often there on weekends and school holidays.

Eventually you will arrive at North Era, where there is a beach and a grassed slope for camping. At the back of the beach is a large fenced-off section—inside is a large midden, serving as a reminder of the Indigenous people who lived in this area long before Europeans arrived.

### Day two

Due to the lack of shade at the North Era campsite, chances are you will be waking up early. The track ahead leads over the hill to the next beach, South Era. Here you will find a large conglomeration of coastal shacks and a surf club, which are usually empty except on weekends and school holidays.

The track continues south across the beach and up the next hill. At the top of this hill, you may follow a ridgeline up to Garrawarra farm and then along a cliff-top four-wheel-drive track for



a slightly quicker finish to the walk. However, the alternative is much more pleasant. Continue down the other side of the hill to Burning Palms, where you will find another magnificent beach with clusters of palm trees along its back edge. From here the track begins a gentle climb through the Palm Jungle. If you have some spare time, detour past the rock shelf south of



From top to bottom, the Figure Eight Pool which is found on a rock shelf just beyond Burning Palms. The ferry arriving at Bundeena. A heritage listed beach shack at Little Garie.

Burning Palms, where you will find the magnificent Figure Eight Pool.

Follow this track upwards through the coastal rainforest for around half an hour to the top of the cliffline. From here the route follows a four-wheel-drive track for a couple of kilometres to the official end of the walk. Here there are great views of the Wollongong coastline. In order to get to the railway station, follow the road until you get to the streets of Oatford. Follow the first downward-sloping road off to your right to the bottom of the gully, where you will find Oatford station. If you have a bit of time to spare here, consider a detour to the Oatford Pantry, where they sell great apple pie. This can be found by following Lady Wakehurst Drive for a few hundred metres extra instead of heading straight down into the Oatford Gully. 🐾

Anna Warr is a Sydney-based photographer who has been at home in the bush ever since her teenage years, which were spent canyoning, walking, canoeing and caving. When not bashing through scrub or hanging from cliffs, she likes to take photos in wild places. She would like to thank Bruce Gray from Nowra NPWS for helping out with information for this article.

# The **Sunset** Country

Rob Kettels describes this adventurous desert walk in north-west Victoria



WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD, A FAMILY FRIEND DESCRIBED A WALK HE went on in the 'sunset country'. The leader of the party apparently had a blocked ear which affected his balance and as a result he got 'geographically confused'. Ever since then I have had a fascination with the area, considering it the Holy Grail of Victorian bushwalking.

The Murray–Sunset National Park is a big place. It is Victoria's second largest national park, containing 633 000 hectares of mallee and semi-arid desert. It has been called Victoria's outback, and this walk goes right into its heart. It traverses a continuous sand dune ridge for more than 13 kilometres and crosses the no man's land we nicknamed 'The Burrens'. Without a doubt, the highlight is the sky: it is huge, and at night the stars will take your breath away.

We treated our walk like a mini expedition as we knew that there wasn't any water and that the area had a reputation as a navigator's worst nightmare. However, if you are well prepared this is a truly unforgettable walk into an untouched desert wilderness.

## **When to go**

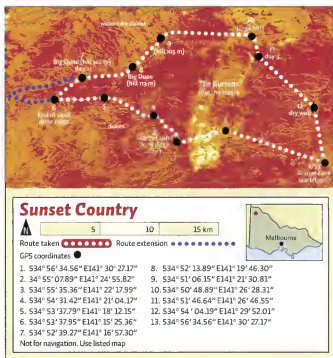
This walk should be undertaken in the cooler months when midday temperatures, sunburn and water use will all be reduced: between April and November is best. We did the walk in early April and temperatures were still reaching the mid-30s. Our strategy was to start walking before sunrise and wait in the shade of trees during the heat of the day. If the walk is completed during winter when daily temperatures are below 20°C, the distances would be easier to achieve.

## **Safety/warnings**

Summer temperatures in the sunset country are regularly above 40°C, making this time of year unsuitable for walking. Large parts of this bushwalk offer little shade, and makeshift lean-tos might be required for shelter from the midday sun. This bushwalk does not follow any tracks and traverses remote country in which navigation is notoriously difficult.

## Maps

Before this walk I had not used a GPS, but I found it invaluable. This article uses waypoints as well as traditional navigation. However, the waypoints are only spot coordinates; traditional navigation techniques like following features is also expected.



Permits aren't required for this walk. However, it is wise to notify the Murray-Sunset National Park rangers in Underbool ([dmurphy@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:dmurphy@parks.vic.gov.au)) to let him know your car is parked at Sunset Tank.

From Melbourne, follow the Calder Highway for 442 kilometres to Ouyen, then take the Mallee Highway for 90 kilometres to Cowangie. Turn right into Sunset Road and drive for 35 kilometres up Sunset Road/Underbool Track to Sunset Tank (a total of 565 kilometres, taking approximately six hours and 30 minutes).

All uncredited photos  
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From Adelaide, follow the South Eastern Freeway to Murray Bridge, then follow the Princes Highway to Tailem Bend. Take the Mallee Highway to Cowangie, turn left into Sunset Road and drive for 35 kilometres up Sunset Road/Underbool Track to Sunset Tank (a total of 300 kilometres, taking around four hours).

## The walk

Sunset Tank is a big, dry hole in the ground and it is hard to imagine that it ever held water. It is located in open country with only a few weedy trees scattered around. Drink lots of water before setting off as you will be on tight water rations for the next four days.

hill shown as 113 metres (4.3 kilometres at 81° or waypoint eight). The sunrise from here was amazing: it is the area's highest point, overlooking a vast plain we called 'The Burrens' after the area in County Clare, Ireland. The plain is without shade or features for 23 kilometres. However, the walk avoids most of it. Head north-east to spot height 105 metres and use the ridge-



From left to right, 'the Burrens'. The author bringing his distinctive style to the desert. Justin Behrens. A well disguised grasshopper. Behrens

## The walk at a glance

Grade	Very hard in temperatures above 30°C, moderate to hard in lower temperatures
Length	Four days
Distance	58 kilometres
Type	Off-track bushwalk through semi-arid desert and mallee
Region	Murray-Sunset National Park, Victoria
Nearest towns	Cowangie or Underbool (nearest large towns with petrol and food)
Start, finish	Sunset Tank
Best time	April–November
Special points	Bring gaiters for protection from spinifex grass; light-weight walking boots are best

Walk through the open woodland and mallee to arrive at an eerie circular plain with large cypress pines (8.8 kilometres at 289° or waypoint two). These pines are a good place for a siesta, although when we were there dead animals were scattered around, a reminder that the drought is affecting wildlife as well as farmers. According to a local, the animals died in the Black Saturday heatwave.

Finish the day by reaching the start of the sand dunes (four kilometres at 256° or waypoint three). Once on top of the dunes, find a campsite. As night falls an amazing show begins: billions of stars appear, so many that the sky looks cloudy. Out in the sunset country you feel very small.

### Day two

In my opinion, this day's walking is on par with the best in Victoria. It traverses an exhilarating sand ridge for 13 kilometres. The dune is made up of white sand, rising to 40 metres high in places, and borders a vast plain. If you are doing this trip in the hotter months, you will need to get up before daybreak to beat the heat: the spectacular sunrises make it easy to wake up early.

Follow the top of the obvious ridge north-west, then west for 13 kilometres (or waypoints four, five and six). If you are travelling well and the temperature is low, continue for a further four kilometres to where the ridgeline merges with the northerly ridge system. We did not get this far, but I am sure it is an amazing place. Cross the plain aiming for the spot height shown as 102 metres. There is a brilliant campsite on top of the hill (three kilometres at 55° or waypoint seven). You are now in the middle of nowhere!

### Day three

Today's leg is a mixture of sand-dune hills and flat, featureless plains. Start out aiming for the

line to skirt around the plain (3.6 kilometres at 60° or waypoint nine). To the north are lovely, wavelike dunes. If it is hot, you will want to cross the plain before the midday sun: blast across aiming for a group of prominent hills to the east. Out here is the real sunset country and the views stretch from horizon to horizon. Find some trees for shade (we set up a lean-to) and it is a good place for an afternoon siesta (7.7 kilometres at 84° or waypoint ten). In the afternoon, head down two kilometres to a flat area that is suitable for overnight camping (two kilometres at 160° or waypoint 11). Here the earth changes colour from white to red.

### Day four

Don't panic if you are running low on water, the car is not too far away. Today's walk is a bit of a culture shock: after two and a half days in semi-arid desert, the route now becomes thick with mallee scrub. Weave a path through spinifex grass, cypress pines and mallee. The hills offer good views back towards sand-dune country, so the tops are worth a visit. Some of the basins between hills contain dried out waterholes—eventually you will reach the largest one. Before the drought, this must have been a centre for life. Now it is a dust bowl, with animal carcasses littering the ground (6.5 kilometres at 138° or waypoint 12). From here it is fine walking through tall mallee eucalypts. Cross the last couple of hills, then traverse open woodland to arrive back at Sunset Tank (4.7 kilometres at 170° or waypoint one and 13). You will be desperate for a drink, but also elated to have completed one of the best adventure walks in the state. 🐾

Rob Kettels has bushwalked since the age of ten. He now climbs big mountains around the globe but considers it high-altitude bushwalking, and reckons that the smell of eucalyptus trees can't be beaten.

## Water, food and equipment

There isn't a water source on this walk. Allow at least three litres per person per day, or even four litres if the weather is forecast to be more than 30°C. We took 13.5 litres each and drank 4.3 litres per day, leaving 600 millilitres for the last day when we knew we had plenty of water waiting in the car. Take food that is easy to prepare and doesn't require much water.

Try to keep your pack weight to around 20 kilograms, 14 kilograms of which will be water. That leaves approximately six kilograms for your pack, food, clothes, sleeping bag and gadgets. We did not take a tent and slept out under the stars. Consider saving weight by not taking a stove and pot.

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# Eyes **BIGGER** than your **stomach**?

The scrub python



Photographer Meg McKone took this photo at the northern end of the Atherton Tablelands, in Far North Queensland: 'As we were driving through a patch of rainforest I noticed a large bundle on the side of the road, so we went back to check out what it was. We were amazed to find this huge python in the process of digesting its last meal. It didn't react to us at all and its coils were so intricate that it took us a minute or two to locate its head. Then I realised I was rather too close, and retreated a few steps while I took photos. I'm still not sure where it had tucked its tail.' Meg McKone

**LEGENDS OF GIANT SNAKES ABOUND IN MANY** parts of the world, although verified accounts rarely match the hype. Even without exaggeration some species can reach truly prodigious proportions, but just what is meant by large? Is it length? Is it girth? What about weight? Certainly the heaviest snake species is not the longest. The common anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*) of South America is generally considered the heaviest snake, but it doesn't reach the lengths attained by some species with slighter builds, such as the reticulated python (*Python reticulatus*) of South-east Asia, which is considered to be the world's longest snake.

Australia has its own giant snakes (and its own rumours of behemoth serpents). Australian pythons range in size from the pygmy python (*Antaresia perthensis*, the world's smallest python) to the impressive scrub python (*Morelia kinghorni*) featured in the photograph, which has been reliably recorded at over 5.6 metres long and 24 kilograms in weight!

Most species of snake eat large meals infrequently. A lack of limbs presents interesting challenges to a hungry snake. First, prey must be located. Most Australian pythons have special-

ised heat sensors (called 'labial pits') on their lower lips. These pits detect infra-red heat—the kind emitted by their warm-blooded prey. The pits help the snake find prey and even help to orient the snake when striking at prey. Labial pits are aided by the use of a forked tongue. Foraging snakes repeatedly flick their tongues out, collecting scent particles, and these are transferred to sense organs known as Jacobson's organs, which are located on the roof of the mouth. Because the tongue is forked and the Jacobson's organs are paired, the snake can determine the direction from which the scent originates.

Next, prey must be secured and subdued. While some snake species possess potent venom for this purpose, non-venomous species such as the scrub python use a rapid strike, brute strength and sharp teeth that curve back into the mouth to ensure that struggling prey do not escape. Once it has grasped its victim, the snake will throw powerful coils around it. Each time the prey exhales, the coils tighten, and the animal is rapidly suffocated.

Finally the snake swallows its prey, usually head first to ensure that the victim's limbs fold back against its body to allow easy passage from

mouth to stomach. The skull and jaw bones of many snakes are articulated in a manner that permits remarkable expansion, and in this way the snake can swallow prey that is wider than its own head. Once the prey has been swallowed the snake needs to re-align these bones; a gaping 'yawn' is all that is needed to put everything back in place. A prominent mid-body bulge is a sure sign that a snake has consumed a large meal. The satiated snake will then usually find a warm, quiet place to digest its meal, and it may not need to feed again for weeks or even months.

Fortunately, there are plenty of warm places for scrub pythons to rest after feeding. Although they frequently enter buildings and sheds, their natural habitat is rainforests and woodlands from Townsville to the northern end of Cape York, as well as the islands of Torres Strait and into southern New Guinea. Their diet consists mainly of mammals such as fruit bats, rats and bandicoots, and because of their size they also take animals as large as wallabies, small pigs and tree kangaroos. With meals this size it is quite common to find a scrub python with a conspicuous bulge in its belly! 🐍

Nick Clemann



## Tasmania's Tarkine Rainforest Track

### Take a path less travelled

If you're anything like us, a guided walk is only appealing if it offers something extraordinary. An experience of remoteness and seclusion, a genuine wilderness getaway and the opportunity to learn about and give something back to the world. To walk the Tarkine Rainforest Track in Tasmania's north west is all of this, and much more.

Like entering a landscope of goblin and faeries, the Tarkine Rainforest Track transports people into a magical world, where a vast tapestry of rich greens forms the backdrop for the full six day experience. Towering rainforest, hidden waterholes, horizontal trees, Giant Fresh Water

Crayfish and every colour of fungi imaginable all reside within this green wonderland. But best of all, we're more likely to see a Tasian Tiger than to run into other bushwalkers on this walk!

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- Day 2 - Giant Eucalyptus canopy, ascend rainforest plateau to camp.
- Day 3 - Giant tree ferns, horizontal forest, Tarkine Falls base camp.
- Day 4 - Day walk to panoramic forest view, camp at Tarkine Falls.

Day 5 - Walk into Heaven, a beautiful waterhole in the forest.

Day 6 - Depart Heaven camp and walk out of the forest.

Join our small group and immerse yourself within the forested walls of the Tarkine, truly a path less travelled.

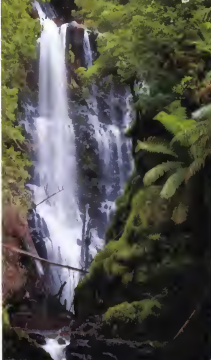
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# World's **best** carbon banks

**Luke Chamberlain reports that there is more evidence to prove that protecting Australia's old growth forests is an investment in the future**



Seventy-year-old mountain ash from the Maroondah catchment in the Yarra Ranges which survived the February 2009 fires. Victoria's mountain ash forests are the most carbon dense known to science. *Ern Mainka*

If the biodiversity values of Australia's magnificent native forests were not enough to warrant the case for their protection, the campaign to end the logging and woodchipping of native forests has just received an enormous boost from a recent scientific report authored by a research team at the Australian National University. The ANU findings, published in the eminent US-based *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, demonstrate that the world's most carbon dense forests are actually found in the mountain ash forests of the Central Highlands of Victoria.

The research compared biomass data from more than 130 sources around the globe and found that Victoria's ash forests are the most carbon dense known to science. This research follows an earlier 2008 ANU publication, *Green Carbon*, which demonstrates that the amount of carbon stored in the forests of south-eastern Australia is hugely underestimated, and that

protection from industrial logging can immediately contribute to huge cuts in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Unfortunately, Victoria's carbon rich forests are the same forests destroyed by Australia's woodchipping industry, sanctioned by state and federal governments.

Not only are the forests of the Central Highlands of Victoria the most carbon dense on earth, they are also home to endangered species such as the Leadbeater's Possum, which will be struggling to survive after the bushfires of this February. The logging also occurs in water catchments, impacting on the future supply and quality of water.

With plantations now able to supply the majority of our wood and paper needs, State and Federal Governments must now move the logging industry out of our native forests. International climate change negotiations have primarily

focused on protecting the world's tropical forests. While ending deforestation in tropical forests is critical to combating climate change, there is an equally urgent need to protect all natural forests from activities which degrade their carbon stores. The Australian Government talks of the need to protect the forests of Papua New Guinea whilst continuing to allow the destruction of the world's most carbon dense forests. The ANU research turns the spotlight on the Australian Government and the case to protect our own forests.

## Act now

Please email Premier John Brumby and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and ask them to protect Australia's native forests.

John Brumby: [premier@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:premier@dpc.vic.gov.au)

Kevin Rudd: [www.pm.gov.au](http://www.pm.gov.au)

# Minister betrays Victorian Coastal Strategy

**Megan Clinton from the Victorian National Parks Association reports on the latest news on Bastion Point**

In June the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, ignored the basic principles of the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 (VCS) when he announced the go-ahead for the controversial Bastion Point breakwater and headland development in Mallacoota in the state's far east. This decision not only ignored the government's own Environmental Effects Study (EES) Panel report, but also failed to adhere to the key principles of the VCS.

The Minister supported a proposal to remove more than 3000 cubic metres of intertidal reef to make way for the boating channel, and the construction of a 130 metre long breakwater which will disturb tidal flows and damage the marine habitat, as well as a two-lane road along the beach. The development will require regular dredging that will further impact on marine life and cause unnatural siltation.

The community has been fighting this development for nearly 20 years, with more than 85 per cent of submissions to the EES inquiry strongly opposed to the development. In his media release, the Minister cited safety and the need for infrastructure to support tourism as his primary reasons for supporting the development.

The extensive EES's final report was released the day of the Minister's announcement. The panel found that the development would have an overall net detriment on tourism and believed the economic case for the harbour development was weak. The panel also believed that it would be difficult to estimate the level of dredging re-



The controversial development planned for Bastion Point on Victoria's coast now looks as though it may go ahead, despite an overwhelming number of objections. Gary Proctor

quired and believed the costs could pose a significant financial burden on managers of the facility.

Marine Safety Victoria (MSV) now needs to conduct a comprehensive safety and risk analysis. Then Gippsland Ports, in cooperation with Council and the Department for Sustainability and Environment will develop a design, which will require MSV approval, before presentation to the Minister for Environment, Gavin Jennings, who will need to sign off under the Coastal Management Act. The VNPA and local community are now calling on Minister Jennings to uphold the VCS principles and reject the proposal. We

believe a low-maintenance, low-cost upgrade to the existing boat ramp will improve ocean access, protect the area's outstanding attractions and values and meet the provisions of the Victorian Coastal Strategy.

## Act now

Please write to Premier Brumby and Minister Jennings to stop this development from going ahead.

Gavin Jennings: [gavin.jennings@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:gavin.jennings@parliament.vic.gov.au)

## Hunters and the hunted

**Andrew Cox reports that a new bill set to go before the New South Wales Parliament could mean that hunters are permitted to hunt in national parks**

In early 2009 the Shooters Party proposed legislation called the *Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009*. This expands a system of hunting currently confined to feral animals in state forests and run by the hunter-dominated Game Council. The bill would allow the Game Council to introduce recreational hunting in national parks, the hunting of 23 native birds and kangaroos, and the establishment of private game reserves. This would be a disaster for visitors to NSW national parks. Recreational hunters could stalk kangaroos, ducks, swans, corellas and quails at any time using guns, crossbows and dogs. It is also feared that private game reserves would allow the establishment of feral animals that are presently not found in NSW.

Unfortunately, the Shooters Party hold two of three crucial votes in the NSW Upper House which, when voting with the Labor Government, provide a majority to pass legislation. It has been offering support for key government legislation, such as the proposed sale of NSW Lotteries, in return for government support of its expanded hunting legislation.

The Game Council has largely been discredited as playing any useful role in feral animal control in NSW. A detailed analysis of the Game Council by independent environment group the Invasive Species Council confirms that there isn't any evidence to support the claim that recreational hunting is an effective or low-cost form of feral animal control. Feral animals can be controlled by an integrated program involving baiting, trapping, biological measures and professional shooters. A regime run by recreational hunters has proven to be unable to deliver conservation goals.

The issue has divided the Labor Government, resulting in the government temporarily withdrawing support for the bill after last-minute lobbying efforts by an enraged public. This is despite Labor's pre-election promise opposing recreational hunting in national parks. As a result of this, the Shooters Party threatened to block any further legislation and, in an unprecedented step, the NSW Government shut down the Upper House a day early by locking the doors of the House, preventing the House from sitting.

NSW Parliament returns from the winter recess at the start of September, and all eyes will be on the Labor Government to see whether it will again support the bill. A large coalition of environment and animal welfare groups is uniting to stop the proposal.

Please lobby your local member of NSW Parliament if it looks as though the bill is set to be passed in any form.

# Tassie update

## Vica Bayley reports on the latest Tasmanian environmental news

Campaigns to protect Tasmania's wild places continue with a new round of community engagement in the forests of the Upper Florentine. The first in a series of carbon-counting days was held in July, when 40 volunteers spent the day gathering data from logging coupe FO44A. The carbon-counting aims to measure the amount sequestered in Tasmania's unprotected public forests and calculate the amount released when these forests are logged. Volunteers recorded the type, age, height and diameter of both living and dead trees, as well as the depth of leaf litter, all of which are carbon stores.

Under current carbon accounting rules in Australia, the native forest logging sector is not required to account for carbon pollution from logging native forests. Recent research shows that the forests of south-east Australia are the most carbon dense on the planet (see article on page 55) and we now know that protecting native forests and woodlands is one of the quickest and cheapest ways we can fight climate change.

Meanwhile, the Tasmanian government continues to promote divisive and environmentally destructive policy through its support of three controversial development proposals, The Tarkine Road (see separate report below), Ralphs Bay marina development and Gunns' native-forest-based pulp mill will have virtually all corners of the state battling ill-conceived and environmentally disastrous proposals.

The Ralphs Bay development entails selling a publicly owned conservation area near Hobart—nationally listed as a wetland important for the survival of 14 migratory waterbirds and unique fish species—to a private company for development into Tasmania's first marina housing development. This kind of development has already been banned in other parts of Australia



Wilderness Society volunteers measure the carbon stored in a threatened coupe in the Upper Florentine Valley. *Matthew Newton*

and should not be an option under Tasmania's state coastal policy.

Finally, uncertainty about the future of Gunns' pulp mill proposal in the Tamar Valley still remains. Having passed most of the inadequate fast-track Tasmanian and Federal Government assessments, Gunns is now desperately seeking finance and a joint-venture partner. Scandinavian pulp- and paper producer Sodra seems to be the only option left. However, Sodra has higher environmental standards than Gunns and has stated that any involvement with the pulp mill is dependent on the use of 100 per cent Forest Stewardship-Council-certified plantation timber and totally chlorine-free technology. The current proposal relies on native forest stock

and outdated chlorine bleaching technology.

At the time of writing, Gunns had just announced that despite lacking final federal government approval and finance, it was proceeding with land clearing to prepare for site works and the construction of a water pipeline.

The Wilderness Society has ramped up its Super Activist campaign. Every year a minimum of nine per cent of your income is contributed to your superannuation, adding up to around \$1 trillion invested in Australia. Many investments directly contradict your personal values. For instance, approximately 40 per cent of Tasmanian logging giant Gunns Ltd's shareholders are superannuation funds. For more info see [www.wilderness.org.au/superactivist](http://www.wilderness.org.au/superactivist)

## Tarkine Road developments

### Phoenix Arrien gives us an update

Opposition to the Tarkine tourist road is growing as local councils, the Cradle-Coast Authority, the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, local tourism operators and conservationists speak out against the project. Proposed by Forestry Tasmania and supported by the Tasmanian Government, the new road still requires federal assessment under the EPBC Act, and the Federal Environment Minister would need to approve construction. (See *Wild* no 113 for more details.)

The latest opponents of the road are 20 experts on the Tasmanian devil who have issued an open letter of concern to the state govern-

ment. Their concern is for the impact the road may have on the future of the Tasmanian devil, as the area is a disease-free refuge at present (from the facial tumour disease).

Tourism operator Tarkine Trails is also against the proposed road, recently launching an online campaign to protect the Tarkine Rainforest Track, a premier bushwalking track they believe is threatened by the road. Marketing Manager, Mark Davis says: 'This summer (may) be the last chance for people to walk the Tarkine Rainforest Track and experience its remote and giant forests in their wild form. If built to plan, the Tarkine tourism road will fundamentally destroy the wilderness values of the walk.'

'Our online campaign aims to spread the word about the fate of the Tarkine Rainforest Track', Mr Davis said. 'We're encouraging people to join our Facebook group and help spread the word.' He continues, 'The Tarkine Rainforest Track could be the next Bay of Fires or Overland Track, but all of this goes out the window with this road proposal. It is not too late for the Tasmanian Government to change their plans; alternatives exist and we are encouraging them to consider a broader strategic focus that will genuinely benefit the Tarkine.'

To view the online campaign visit: [www.facebook.com/pages/Hobart/Tarkine-Trails/7860400217?ref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hobart/Tarkine-Trails/7860400217?ref=ts)

## Kimberley update

### Josh Coates reports on the latest developments up north

In *Wild* no 113 we reported on the proposal for a massive fossil-fuel gas-processing plant 50 kilometres north of Broome, which is being championed by the Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett and the company Woodside. Woodside's joint venture (JV) partners (Chevron, Shell, BP and BHP) are yet to support the Kimberley option, and are considering Pilbara processing options as well.

In other developments, the Kimberley Land Council has signed an agreement which the State Government and Woodside are using to say that indigenous people support the proposal, although the details have not yet been made public. The 'in principle' agreement is subject to conditions such as the undertaking of cultural and environmental studies by the Traditional Owners, as well as normal environmental approvals. The agreement will not be formalised until an Indigenous Land Use Agreement is signed, which will not happen before December.

What is clear is that we should not be repeating mistakes and destroying the environment for the profit of multinational corporations and unsustainable fly-in, fly-out jobs—we can protect the environment and create jobs through investing in sustainable industries such as ecotourism and land management.

As part of its consultation process for the election commitment of \$9 million for a Kimberley Science & Conservation Strategy (KS&CS), the Wilderness Society (along with other major environment groups) has taken a lead role in producing a submission to the State Government which includes 29 recommendations. The key recommendation is: 'That the State Government develop and implement a comprehensive conservation and compatible development plan for the Kimberley, which is based on a broad-scale regional planning process and



Protesters against planned industrial developments in the Kimberley make their voice heard outside Woodside's head office. Leigh Swenson

integrates conservation protection and management, indigenous rights and interests, and long-term compatible economic development.'

This recommendation cuts to the core of what is needed in the Kimberley: an end to ad hoc development and under-resourced conservation management, with a move to integrated, science-based management of one of the world's most significant natural and cultural landscapes. An important step is the clear identification of conservation-compatible development and the ruling out of incompatible activities

such as large-scale industrial development (for example fossil-fuel processing and broad-scale irrigated agriculture requiring dams).

### Act now

To read more and download the joint eNGO submission, visit [www.wilderness.org.au/kimberley](http://www.wilderness.org.au/kimberley). Add your voice to the 'Hands Up for the Kimberley' supporter list and map by hitting the 'Take Action' button. Let the multinational fossil-fuel companies and the governments know that the Kimberley is not for sale!

## Tourism trapping for national parks

### Andrew Cox writes that worrying developments are taking place in NSW national parks

The NSW Government has succumbed to tourism industry pressure to make development in national parks easier in an attempt to encourage more tourist visits. A special task force was established during 2008 to investigate the government's target of increasing visitation to national parks by 20 per cent over ten years, and the consequent boost in tourism revenue. The final report was handed down in December

2008 and immediately adopted by the government without the promised opportunity for public comment.

Environment groups generally supported the aim to increase visitation to national parks but immediately slammed the report. The changes will allow the insertion of the broadly defined term 'tourism' into the management principles for national parks as defined in legislation. A large range of new structures will then be allowed to be built in national parks such as resorts, hotels, retail shops, amusement parks and any other infrastructure that could serve tourists.

The key lobby group for the changes, the Tourism & Transport Forum, has been calling for the removal of barriers for new accommodation in parks and seems to have been successful in achieving its goals. Environment groups have been looking for initiatives that encourage new park visitors, such as better promotion and improved walking tracks, with accommodation being offered in nearby townships rather than within parks. The government has largely ignored these calls. New legislation implementing these changes is due in the NSW Parliament in September or October 2009.



# Jill Redwood: a profile

## Ross Taylor speaks to Environment East Gippsland's fearless coordinator

As Editor, part of my job entails editing each issue's Green Pages' contributions. What always strikes me is the passion of our contributors, especially as fighting for the environment can be a thankless task, with more losses than wins. Many people believe wild places are a resource to be exploited for profit, and convincing them to see otherwise goes against the grain of society. As part of our 'green issue', I spoke to one of our most reliable contributors, East Gippsland resident Jill Redwood, to find out about her motivations and give a glimpse into what activism is about at the grassroots level.

Jill has been a contributor to *Wild* for a long time, providing many articles and cartoons since her debut in 1994. She is also a long-standing, passionate defender of the environment, the coordinator of EEG, and editor of its newsletter *The Potoroo Review*. Jill was the inaugural winner of the *Wild Environmentalist* of the Year. She has lived in East Gippsland for more than 30 years, establishing and running a property using sustainable methods (which includes an eco-cottage for holiday rental) and keeping Clydesdale horses.

When I first got some answers back from Jill, I was surprised at their rawness. It is clear that for those on the front line of the environment movement, every loss is painfully felt, with outrage firing an incredible passion. I found this fire inspiring, and hope you do too.

**People who have been living in an area for a long time often form a very strong bond with that place. What does East Gippsland mean to you?**

East Gippsland is a small remnant of what has survived and evolved since Gondwanan times. The forests connect the sea to the snow and the last ice age to the present day. It's an ark of ancient natural treasures and I feel honoured to be able to live amongst it all, smell its scents and drink the stream water straight from the forests. There's an endless art gallery out here that's free to walk through. It has tiny, delicate plants next to leviathan-sized giants, all richly sculptural. There are colours, textures and patterns, night sounds and earthy, spicy smells that are priceless. (Maybe they'd be valued more highly if they were made by humans and sold in a fancy package.) This small corner of Australia is a real masterpiece. The forest is like my garden, and the wildlife and birds are like dear friends.

**What or who inspired your love of the outdoors?**

I think my love of the natural world and animals was innate from day one. My father also encouraged my fascination with nature and taught me not to be scared of spiders at an early age. Jane Goodall and her work in Africa with wild animals also inspired me when I was young.

**What was it that sparked your interest in becoming an environmental activist?**

It was seeing young boys gleefully destroy a bird's nest with young in it when I was about seven. Ever since then I have witnessed equally callous treatment of nature and the defenceless—mostly by grown men, who are now far more capable of being brutish hooligans, whether they wear blue singlets or collars and ties. My East Gippsland activism was motivated by moving to the region 30 years ago and seeing large swathes of magnificent ferny forests reduced to churned earth and ash—I guess it was outrage at injustice that sparked my activism.

**At times it must be immensely frustrating running an organisation trying to protect the environment, particularly when it comes to dealing with bureaucracy. What is it that has kept you going?**

When wildlife is killed, ancient trees sawn down, mountainsides annihilated by bulldozers and chainsaws year after year, it can be incredibly depressing. Political-party donations are valued more highly than our clean water, fresh air and untouched natural places. The local logging 'mafia' and media try to intimidate and discredit me, and have tried to assassinate my character. Every day, every year, I witness massive trees going past my front gate on their way to the woodchip mill. When it's in your face daily, there isn't an option, I can't turn off the emotions and go and weed the carrot bed. Thankfully, I was born with a good dollop of determination and don't give a damn what locals think.

**What have you found most frustrating about your job?**

That it's actually become a 'job'. It takes up most of my time when I initially came here just to enjoy living simply with my animals. Dealing with shamelessly dishonest politicians and forestry officials makes you despair for this system of democracy. There have been comparatively few wins. The local media panders sickeningly to a perceived audience of right-leaning neckbeards and I've spent most of my life locking horns with sluggish barbarians; not my choice if I had one.

**I know that you are worried that your answers have been too negative—you obviously feel quite negative about the future of our environment and our current model of democracy. However, despite this you are still working to make the world a better place. Does this suggest an innate optimism?**

I'm more of a realist than an optimist. The environment is certainly going to suffer a lot more yet. If I can help to save some small areas as 'arks' or sanctuaries, then when either a major human catastrophe hits, or by some miracle humans decide to reduce our population and treat the planet more respectfully, there'll be



Jill Redwood in her natural environment: East Gippsland's beautiful bush. Tracey Callander

some building blocks for nature to start restoring herself.

**You mentioned earlier that your activism is motivated by injustice, but it is also clear that your love of wild places is an important part of your motivation. Given this, do you think that it is very important for the environment movement that people are exposed to the beauty of the outdoors?**

Yes, definitely. Without that connection and appreciation there can be no caring.

**Often people feel quite powerless when it comes to creating change. As a campaigner, do you have any tips for making a difference to the environment?**

We can change our personal choices by only buying plantation or recycled wood, 100 per cent genuine recycled paper and so on, but our most effective actions are directed at changing the ways of decision makers and irresponsible companies. EEG has tried many strategies, with some successful outcomes involving legal challenges, threatened-species surveys, media embarrassment and the use of high-profile people to support the cause. But public opinion is the big one: governments are sensitive to that. Their favourite barometers are talk-back radio and letters to the local paper, to let them know that the lines they feed to the public aren't being swallowed. Or even better, expose the government over something they have done and try to shame them. Call various media outlets with a clear story outline and see if you can get them to bite. Becoming a campaigner is a hundred times more effective than avoiding plastic bags.

**Thanks Jill!**

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## OBITUARY

### Ben Morrow, 20 July 1974–6 July 2009

Friends and family reflect on this passionate wilderness campaigner and *Wild* contributor who recently lost his battle with cancer

The Earth lost a good friend with the passing of Ben. He was a brave and dedicated campaigner and a voice for all things natural and moral. His campaigning transcended all aspects of action, from putting his body on the line, to community mobilisation. Ben's love and appreciation for all things wild did not stop with his activism. The natural world was a playground and temple that provided recreation and inspiration, with relaxation through surfing or rockclimbing and meditation on a solitary rock, mossy log or sandy beach.

Ben contributed endless energy to his campaigns to protect native forests in NSW and Tasmania and he was an inspiration to others. His efforts attracted the attention of lawyers and he was a defendant in the infamous Gunns' 20 lawsuit, and was pursued by NSW forestry interests. More importantly, Ben's efforts have directly contributed to the protection of thousands of hectares of precious native forests from logging; an achievement that will outlast all of us and serve as a permanent memorial to his belief in being able to make a difference.

Above all, Ben was a fabulous friend to all he knew. His big heart, wide smile and unwavering belief in what is right earned him the love and admiration of a diverse community. He will be dearly missed and his contributions never forgotten.

'We will always be together, in the forest. We will always be together, in the forest.'

**Right**, Ben Morrow suspended over the Weld River in Australia's first ever bridge sit—locking out logging in Tasmania's threatened Weld Valley.

Matthew Newton



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## Woodchips

### Victoria's alpine resorts due for a shake-up

Phil Ingamells reports that a State Services Authority report to the Victorian Government has called for radical changes to the management of Victoria's alpine resorts.

One strong recommendation is that the resorts—currently geared to high-end tourism—should cater for people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and that they should actually be held to account on this.

Another very welcome recommendation is that Mt Stirling should no longer be managed as an alpine resort but come under the care of Parks Victoria. We hope this will allow the area to be managed for its high conservation values, and pave the way for its inclusion in the Alpine National Park.

The report also calls for further developments at Lake Mountain and Mt Baw Baw to cease due to predictions of reduced snowfalls, with ongoing monitoring of climate predictions needed to establish the viability of all other resorts.

From next year the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council should be dissolved, and the Department of Sustainability & Environment should take over. You can find the Review of Alpine Resort Areas at: [www.ssa.vic.gov.au](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au), and you can encourage Gavin Jennings, Minister for the Environment & Climate Change, to implement these recommendations by sending him a note.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)



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# Overnight walking guidebooks

**John Chapman** does a comprehensive survey of Australian walking guides that cover overnight and longer adventures

## Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of Wild Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of Wild, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. Wild Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by Wild's editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor; the referee and Wild, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

**HAVE YOU EVER DECIDED YOU WANT TO WALK** in a new area and spent days chasing other walkers for information or trawling internet forums for details—and then, when you eventually do the walk, discovered that other people are using a guidebook? Reading it beforehand would have saved a lot of effort and made planning much easier. This scenario happens regularly because many walking guidebooks are not widely known and some are only sold in the region they describe. This survey aims to investigate all the guides to overnight walking in Australia currently available, and thereby to provide a much-needed resource for bushwalkers.

What does a walking guidebook describe? In essence, it is a compilation of the knowledge of the authors about an area or about specific walks. Some guides contain a wealth of information but are poorly organised, with long slabs of text or poor maps, while others are very brief, leaving a considerable amount of information to be discovered on the walk. Most are somewhere in between these two extremes. In general, guides have improved a lot in recent years with the inclusion of better maps and gradient profiles, and with the use of colour printing.

This survey includes all guides that I know of that describe overnight or longer walks. Some cover both day and overnight walks, but this survey concentrates on the overnight walking content. It focuses on walks of two days or longer because it is on longer walks that the benefit of planning before travelling to a new area is greatest.

### Title

We show the title as displayed on the cover.

### Author

As shown on the cover or inside, on the title or imprint page (the page that displays the copyright and publishing details). 'Ed' means that the book has an editor and a number of contributors, and that you can expect the content to vary more as each writer will have a different style.

### ISBN

A unique number, the international standard book number or ISBN, is issued for every book published worldwide. Use this number when

Walking guides can take you to some amazing spots: Horseshoe Inlet, Bathurst Channel, Southwest National Park, Tasmania. Grant Dixon



# Guidebook Survey 2009

Area, title	Author/s	Publisher	ISBN	Year published, edition	Weight, grams	Width x height, millimetres	Total number of pages	Overnight walks only										Comments
								Number of pages	Number of photos	Number of walks	Number of days walking	Number and type of maps	Map scales	Gradient profiles	Number of pages of advertising	Approx price, \$		
Australia																		
Australian Alps Walking Track	John Chapman, Monica Chapman & John Siseman	John Chapman	978 1 9209 9506 5	2009, 4th	420	148 x 210	240	202	138	1	50	48, C, T	1:50 000	34, 5	0	37.50	Track described from south to north	
Australia's Best Walks	Tyrone Thomas, Andrew Close	Explore Australia Publishing	978 1 74117 2409	2008, 1st	285	148 x 210	160	10	5	2	4	6, C, T	1:50 000	2, 5	0	35	Selected overnight walks plus many day walks	
Bushwalking in Australia	John & Monica Chapman	John Chapman	0 9596 1297 1	2003, 4th	470	148 x 210	320	306	167	25	94	47, C, T	Varied	36, 5	0	40	Selected walks in all states of Australia; online updates available	
Walking in Australia	Andrew Bain et al	Lonely Planet	1 7405 3303 3	2006, 5th	400	128 x 197	412	163	3, B	38	112	43, 2C, T	Varied	20, V	0	40	Selected walks in all states of Australia; includes many day walks	
New South Wales																		
Bushwalks In the Sydney Region Volume 1	Eds: S Lord & G Daniel	National Parks Association of NSW	978 0 957 4167 2	2007, 6th	310	176 x 245	140	56	0	25	53	41, 2C, M	1:25 000	no	0	30	Selected overnight walks plus many day walks	
Bushwalks in the Sydney Region Volume 2	Eds: S Lord & G Daniel	National Parks Association of NSW	0 9577 4160 8	2006, 4th	300	176 x 245	164	54	0	16	40	35, 2C, M	1:25 000	no	0	30	As above	
Bushwalking in the Budawang	Ron Doughton	Envirobook	0 8538 1072 7	2004, 3rd	310	148 x 210	152	66	43	20	46	19, C, M	Varied	no	0	25	Comprehensive guide to all tracks and routes	
Classic Blue Mountains Walks	David Noble	Wild Publications	Insert for Wild no 60	1996	20	103 x 150	28	24	3	10	29	10, B, M	Varied	no	3	8	Just gone out of print	
Discovering Yengo & Dharug National Parks...on Foot	Anthony Dunk	Envirobook	0 8588 1183 9	2001, 1st	100	125 x 180	96	9	4, B	6	15	3, B, M	Varied	no	0	14	Comprehensive guide to these little known parks; includes many day walks	
Take a Walk in a National Park Port Macquarie to Brisbane	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	0 9577 9312 X	2000, 1st	380	148 x 210	224	5	0	3	7	0	na	no	16	22	Selected overnight walks plus many day walks	
Take a Walk in A National Park Sydney to Port Macquarie	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	0 9577 9311 1	2000, 1st	380	148 x 210	224	5	0	4	9	0	na	no	16	22	As above	
Take a Walk in New South Wales National Parks South-Eastern Zone	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	0 9577 9313 8	2002, 1st	440	148 x 210	320	27	0	10	34	4, B, M	Varied	no	20	25	As above	
Take a Walk in the Blue Mountains	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	978 0 9577 9316 3	2007, 2nd	230	148 x 210	168	14	10	2	6	2, C, M	Varied	2, 5	18	25	As above	
Northern Territory																		
Larapinta Trail	John & Monica Chapman	John Chapman	978 1 9209 9504 1	2008, 1st	315	148 x 210	160	114	79	1	20	20, C, T	1:50 000	21, 5	0	30	Full notes for both directions; online updates available	
Take a Walk in Northern Territory's National Parks	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	0 9577 9315 4	2006, 1st	410	148 x 210	312	63	38	9	48	20, C, M	Varied	24, 5	25	30	Also includes many day walks	
Queensland																		
Classic Walks in Southern Queensland	John & Lyn Daly	Wild Publications	Insert for Wild no 100	2006	20	103 x 150	28	21	4	7	21	7, C, M	Varied	no	4	8	Also includes many day walks	
Take a Walk in South-East Queensland	John & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	978 0 9577 9317 0	2009, 2nd	485	148 x 210	368	31	13	12	34	11, C, M	Varied	14	27	35	Also includes many day walks	
South Australia																		
Heyden Trail, South Australia Southern Guide		Department for Environment and Heritage	0 7590 1083 8	2007, 2nd	310	148 x 210	132	112	73	1	30	48, C, T	1:50 000	101, 5	0	30	Walk described from south to north	
Heyden Trail, South Australia Book Two: Spelding to Parachilna Gorge		Department for Environment and Heritage	1 9210 1896 8	2005	320	148 x 210	134	109	74	1	30	56, C, T	1:50 000	101, 5	0	30	Walk described from south to north	

## Guidebook Survey 2009 continued

Area, title	Author/s	Publisher	ISBN	Year published, edition	Weight, grams	Width x height, millimetres	Total number of pages	Overnight walks only										Comments
								Number of pages	Number of photos	Number of walks	Number of days walking	Number and type of maps	Map scales	Gradient profiles	Number of pages of advertising	Approx price, \$		
Tasmania																		
100 Walks in Tasmania	Tyrone Thomas & Andrew Close	Explore Australia Publishing	978 1 7411 7258 4	2008	658	148 x 210	392	101	22	12	32	65, C, T	1:25 000	32, S	2	35	Also includes many day walks	
Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks	John Chapman, Monica Chapman & John Sisman	John Chapman	1 9209 9501 3	2006, 5th	365	148 x 210	192	128	90	13	56	26, C, T	Varied	35, S	0	35	Comprehensive guide to the World Heritage area north of the Lyell Highway; online updates available	
Classic Tasmanian World Heritage Walks	John Chapman	Wild Publications	Insert for Wild no 80	2001	20	103 x 150	24	0	4	30	4, C, M	Varied		no	4	8	Selected walks in the World Heritage Area	
Overland Track	John Chapman & Monica Chapman	John Chapman	978 1 9209 9505 8	2008, 2nd	140	148 x 210	64	44	33	2	10	10, C, T	1:50 000	15, S	0	18	Track described from north to south; online updates available	
South Coast Track	John & Monica Chapman	John Chapman	978 1 920935 97 2	2009, 1st	135	148 x 210	64	34	24	1	8	9, C, T	1:50 000	9, S	0	18	Full notes for both directions; online updates available	
South West Tasmania	John Chapman	John Chapman	978 1 9209 9509 4	2008, 5th	435	148 x 210	224	174	108	20	190	24, C, T	Varied	27, S	0	37.50	Comprehensive guide to the World Heritage area south of the Lyell Highway; online updates available	
Victoria																		
150 Walks in Victoria	Tyrone Thomas & Andrew Close	Explore Australia Publishing	978 1 7411 7238 6	2007	804	148 x 210	456	68	8	14	34	41, C, T	Varied	no	2	35	Also includes many day walks	
Bushwalks in the Victorian Alps	Glenn van der Knijff	Open Spaces Publishing	0 9587 3318 X	2004	337	140 x 210	190	99	44	20	44	9, C, S	Varied	20, S	0	33	As above	
Extended Walks in the Victorian Alps: Four of the Best	Glenn van der Knijff	Wild Publications	Insert for Wild no 11	2009	20	103 x 150	28	23	4	4	28	4, C, M	Varied	no	4	8		
Take a Walk in Victoria's National Parks	John Daly & Lyn Daly	Take a Walk Publications	0 9577 9334 6	2005	484	148 x 210	368	46	45	17	59	16, C, M	Varied	no	30	30	Also includes many day walks	
Walking the Wilderness Coast	Peter Cook & Chris Dowd		0 9752 1410 1	2004, 3rd	215	148 x 210	160	33	12, B	3	22	6, B, M	Varied	no	0	27.50	Describes coastal traverse from Cape Conran in Victoria to Eden in NSW	
Weekend Walks Around Melbourne	Glenn Tempest	Open Spaces Publishing	0 9587 3316 3	2003	281	140 x 210	160	136	63	17	43	33, C, M	Varied	no	0	33		
Western Australia																		
A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track: Northern Half	Ed: Annie Keating	Department of Conservation and Land Management	0 7309 6874 X	2002, 2nd	240	108 x 150	312	239	102	1	25	30, C, T	1:75 000	46, S	1	35	Full track notes for both directions; online updates available	
A Guide to the Bibbulmun Track: Southern Half	Ed: Annie Keating	Department of Conservation and Land Management	0 7309 6876 6	2004, 2nd	260	108 x 150	328	250	68	1	25	35, C, T	1:75 000	57, S	1	35	Full track notes for both directions; online updates available	
Mountain Walks in the Stirling Range Part Two	AT Morphet	Torridon Publications	0 6462 9139 4	1996, 1st	196	130 x 175	136	84	0	1	3	1, B, T	1:50 000	no	0	15	Detailed description with many line drawings of Stirling Ridge Walk	
The Cape to Cape Guidebook	Jane Scott & Ray Forman	Cape to Cape Publishing	978 0 9382 3371 8	2008, 4th	280	168 x 235	208	180	108	1	10	22, C, T	1:25 000	no	0	22	Walk described from south to north	
Number of photos: Black and white    Number and type of maps: C full colour, S 2 colours, B one colour, Topographic maps, Shaded map, M road map    Gradient profile: Same scale, Varied scale																		
Publishers' web addresses																		
Cape to Cape Publishing			www.cape2cape.com			Lonely Planet			www.lonelyplanet.com			www.npansw.org.au						
Department of Conservation and Land Management			www.calm.wa.gov.au			National Parks Association of NSW			www.npansw.org.au			www.osp.com.au						
Department for Environment and Heritage			www.environment.sa.gov.au			Open Spaces Publishing			www.osp.com.au			www.takeawalk.com.au						
Envirobook			www.envirobook.com.au			Take a Walk Publications			www.takeawalk.com.au			na						
Explore Australia Publishing			www.hardiegrant.com.au			Torridon Publications			www.torridonpubs.com.au			na						
John Chapman			www.john.chapman.name			Wild Publications			www.wild.com.au			na						

ordering books. Up until 2008, ISBNs consisted of ten digits; those for books published from 2008 on have 13 digits.

### Year published

This is the date when a book was printed. One of the guides surveyed displays no date and an estimated date has been shown in brackets.

### Weight

This is shown to the nearest five grams.

### Size

This is the printed size of the book. Holding the binding on the left, it is width first, then height second.

useful for planning but are insufficient for detailed navigation.

### Overnight walks: map scale

Ideal map scales for walking range from 1:25 000 to around 1:70 000. Maps at smaller scales (those with higher numbers after the colon in the scale ratio) are useful for planning but not



## A note on accuracy

All guidebooks are out-of-date by the time they become available. This is because at least three months must elapse between the author's last walk and the release date, and for some walks the lead time may be more than a year. It is not feasible to write a guidebook (which can take six months full-time), then redo every walk in the book just before printing. If the market demanded this, it is probable that no walking guide would ever be written for Australia. The market for these books is very small and most titles sell only a couple of hundred copies each year. A useful feature, provided by some authors and publishers, that can help you keep your guidebooks up-to-date after printing is a web page with updates.

## How to get the most out of a guidebook

Many walkers curse guidebooks when the problem is that they have not recognised the authors' aims. It is important to recognise how much detail is provided: an indication of this is the average number of pages per day of walking. What level of experience is expected of the book's readers? Text-only descriptions are usually meant for experienced walkers and navigators. Books with detailed maps and gradient profiles are more suited to the less experienced. Are maps included? Are they only useful for planning or are they detailed enough to walk from? Is the route of the walk shown on the maps or will you need to spend hours transcribing notes on to maps? Are the text and maps linked together in some way by numbers or other symbols?

If gradient profiles are included, are the profiles a simple set of straight lines to give a rough indication or are they more detailed, showing minor knolls and multiple grade changes? If updates are available, read them just before attempting a walk.

### Total number of pages

This is the total number of internal pages in the book.

### Overnight walks: number of pages

This is the total number of pages (including maps) that actually describe overnight walks. All books contain additional material such as safety or background information and contents pages. A number of the guidebooks in this survey also describe day walks and in these books a lower percentage of the total number of pages is dedicated to overnight walks.

### Overnight walks: number of photographs

Many people find a photograph to be worth many words. This figure is the number of photographs that are included with the notes. Photographs that are placed elsewhere in the book can be hard to relate to a specific walk and are not included in this count. All photographs are in colour unless indicated otherwise.

### Overnight walks: number of walks and number of days

These figures indicate how useful the book might be for overnight and longer walks. It is easy to calculate the average number of pages devoted to each day of walking, and hence how much detail is provided, by dividing the number of pages that describe overnight walking by the number of days described. Some guides describe many walks with minimal detail, while others provide a great deal of detailed information. Guides with more information are usually better for the less experienced while many experienced walkers find brief descriptions adequate.

### Overnight walks: number of maps

This column shows the number and type of maps in the guide that relate to overnight walks. Colour topographic maps are best. At the other extreme, the term 'mud maps' indicates simple line drawings that often show just streams, roads and features. In between topographic maps and mud maps are those we describe as 'shaded': they show land elevations by means of shading but the interval between contours is very large (200 metres). These maps may be

for navigation on a walk. A listing of 'varied' indicates that the author has drawn maps to fit the page, making it harder to navigate and compare walks.

### Overnight walks: gradient profiles

These are a common feature in more recent walking guides. Gradient profiles are graphs depicting the vertical elevation against the track length. The vertical scale is exaggerated to show gradients more clearly. Gradient profiles are useful for gauging how steep climbs and descents are. They are most useful when they can be compared with each other and for this to be possible all profiles within a book should use the same vertical and horizontal scales. The quality of profiles varies widely: some are drawn as straight lines between major points and may not reflect actual gradients, while others are drawn more accurately, showing every significant rise and fall.

### Advertising

This is included in the survey because some users do not like guidebooks that contain advertisements. The table shows the number of pages of commercial advertising included within the book. This count does not include any advertisement for the publisher, the author or associated volunteer groups. For walkers, advertisements are simply extra pages to carry but for the publisher they might mean the difference between publishing and not.

### Approximate price

We show the suggested retail price, rounded to the nearest half dollar.

### Value or quality

This survey does not give a rating for value or quality. It is not that relevant as every guide has value—in many cases there is only one guide to the area anyway so there is no choice. As well, as an author of some of these books I could be considered to be biased, so I leave it to others to judge the quality of each book. ☹

John Chipman has walked in every state of Australia many times and written many walking guidebooks. He is also a keen photographer and the recipient of many international honours. His favourite activity is doing multiweek trips to anywhere that's interesting.



# When blue means green

Look after your gear and the environment

One of the best ways to extend the life of your gear is to maintain it properly. For walkers, one of the most important pieces of gear is the waterproof jacket, which after time will begin to 'wet out' as the water-resistant treatment on the face of the fabric wears off. **Granger's XT Spray Waterproofer** is perfect for maintaining the water repellency of your jacket, with a spray-on formula that enhances the breathability and water resistance of all outdoor jackets, whether they be 'soft' or 'hard' shells. Adding to the 'green' appeal of using Grangers is that it is one of a growing number of outdoor companies (including Patagonia,



Reproofing your wet weather gear with a product like Granger's XT Proofer will keep you warmer and drier and will mean that your gear also lasts longer.

Mountain Equipment Co-op and Vaude) that have signed up to the bluesign® standard. Bluesign is an independent Swiss organisation that is set up to ensure that the environmental standards of signatory companies exceed statutory requirements. The standards are based on five principles: resource productivity, consumer safety, air emission, water emission, and health and occupational safety. All companies signed up to bluesign® have to ensure that their processes—from raw material to finished product—comply with the standard, which means consumers can be more confident that the product they are buying has been produced to a high environmental standard. The XT Spray Waterproofer retails for \$29.95 for 275 millilitres—enough to treat four garments. Grangers produces a large range of products to clean, proof and maintain your gear; speak to **Sea to Summit** on (08) 9221 6617 to find out more.

## Making the old new again

British company **Montane** has produced two ultra-lightweight, windproof and water-resistant jackets that are made of 98 per cent recycled fabrics. The **Element Jacket** (women's) and **Fila-**



The **Fila-** and **Element** Jackets (top) are made from recycled fabrics, giving you that warm, fuzzy feeling in most conditions.

**ment Jacket** (men's) are made of post-consumer and industrial waste (usually from workwear) and, at the end of their life, can be recycled again if sent back to Montane, as part of the ECO-Circle process (see [www.ecocircle.jp/index.e.html](http://www.ecocircle.jp/index.e.html) to find out more). The jackets use a combination of Pertex Quantum and Microlight ECO fabrics, which means that they are windproof and provide protection from light rain while remaining exceptionally light (170 grams and 185 grams respectively). Both jackets feature two zipped chest pockets and a rollaway hood with a shaped peak, and conveniently stuff into their own pockets. They each retail for \$179. Contact **Wildside Design** to find out more at [www.wildside.com.au](http://www.wildside.com.au) or email [sales@wildside.com.au](mailto:sales@wildside.com.au).

## 'Knick-Knacks

### Panda food on your feet

Bridgeland has produced a new line of socks made of bamboo, which is a sustainable, renewable resource. The Bamboo series comes in both men's and women's fit, the Bamboo Crew (medium, large and extra large) and Women's Bamboo Crew (small, medium and large). The socks are made of 35 per cent bamboo fibre, 34 per cent CoolMax (which helps move moisture to the top of the sock), 30 per cent nylon and one per cent lycra. Bamboo is naturally breathable and antimicrobial, is cooler than wool or cotton and feels soft against the skin. The socks are guaranteed for one year and come in recycled paper packaging, printed with vegetable-based inks. They retail for \$39.95. Speak to **Sea to Summit** to find out more.



Bridgeland's Bamboo Crew. Right, Exped's Explorer SA.



### Trekking in the green zone

Swiss company **Exped** is producing its trekking poles with an environmentally friendly anodising that avoids the use of toxic chemicals such as nitric and phosphoric acid. The Explorer SA is Exped's most popular model, produced from high quality DAC Featherlite TH72M aluminium that is anodised inside and out to prevent corrosion. The poles also feature shock absorption, and are adjustable from 105 to 130 centimetres in four sections. When you want to pack them away they drop down to 54 centimetres, and they weigh only 215 grams. Exped



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also minimises packaging, while what packaging it does use is made of recycled materials. The poles retail for \$219.95. Speak to Expedition Equipment on (02) 9417 5755 to find out more.

## In the footsteps of the Diggers

Magellan has released a new mapping program covering Papua New Guinea for its GPS receivers. Discover PNG is the first available detailed topo-

graphic mapping of PNG for GPSs and includes the famed Kokoda Track. It shows the position of the track and villages along the way and uses vector mapping, which allows the user to zoom in and out. In the famously steep country that the Kokoda Track traverses, the contour interval is five metres. The mapping covers all of PNG and goes down to street level in the major cities. Discover PNG runs on the Magellan Triton 400, 500, 1500 and 2000 models and retails for \$249. See [www.nextdestination.com.au](http://www.nextdestination.com.au) to find out more. 

## Till death us do part: gear for life?

### Wilderness Equipment's Ian Maley gives us some tips for extending the life of our equipment

The Second Law of Thermodynamics comes in many forms: such as that disorder in a closed system can only increase unless you do some work on it from outside—which has got me thinking about the state of my office. Another is the idea that time only goes forward, and so every human activity, like writing this article, is always done at the last possible moment. The natural direction is towards disorder.

When it comes to outdoors equipment, these Second Law concepts have some clear parallels. Probably the surest place to find not-so-shiny examples is in the boot of any canoeist's old Volvo. The unrecognisable mouldy pile of fabric was once a perfectly good bag, and the rust next to it a wheel arch. Without a basic level of care, decomposition sets in.

There are two points. The first is that you need to know what to look out for and how to deal with it to avoid disappointment. The second is that by choosing good equipment, caring for it and making timely repairs when necessary, you can vastly increase its useful life. The result will be a dramatic reduction in the demand for the non-renewable resources from which modern outdoors gear is made. This effect will far outweigh the benefits of simply incorporating some recycled components.

So what are the main agents of destruction? More than 30 years using, making and repairing gear suggest the following order: salt and moisture (hand in hand in marine environments) at the top of the list, with dust next. Following behind are the UV in sunlight and heat generally, and the much rarer assorted domestic and industrial chemical agents. Then there are all the other things that can happen out there either as a result of 'misadventure' (such as cramponing your tent while digging it out of a snowdrift) or what I like to think of as 'unintelligent use' (like bush bashing through thorny scrub in your very expensive, very lightweight and once quite beautiful rain shell). Anyway, look out for the following:

### All-metal components

Tent poles, zip sliders (most are painted die-cast), bootlace fittings, press studs, metal frames and fasteners. The anodising, plating or coatings

used to protect these fittings are easily scratched or worn. Many of our great walks are coastal ones. If you have been in any salt-contaminated environment, rinse everything thoroughly with fresh water, then dry well before storing and finish with water-repellent treatments. Salt absorbs water from the air, so salty gear is always damp. After a trip, take salt seriously! Don't just wash your clothing; wash everything.

### Fabrics

Avoid the unnecessary exposure of very lightweight fabrics to direct UV light. All common synthetic materials are degraded by UV to some extent, and nylons are particularly susceptible. The other big issue with fabrics is that many polyurethane (PU) coatings are degraded in the constant presence of moisture (hydrolysis). Since PU is a common and excellent waterproof coating for most lightweight synthetic fabrics, tents and rain shells need to be completely dry before they are stored. (PVC is a common waterproof coating but mainly on budget textiles/products. It doesn't suffer hydrolysis but it is toxic throughout its life, especially at manufacture and disposal. Since we're talking green, it simply cannot be on the fabric-coating menu).

### Zips

These are at the core of most gear failures. Maybe because of this, they retain a degree of mystery few of us are prepared to probe. Contamination by grit and dust cause premature wear of all components and extra operating drag on zips, further accelerating the wear and distortion of sliders. Wash dust, grit and salt crystals out of zips regularly, then follow with a silicone-spray lubricant that finishes dry. It does wonders.

### Clothing

Unless expressly stated on the care label, wash all clothing regularly and maintain surface-water beading as required. Many moisture-vapour-permeable fabrics actually require regular cleaning. A high level of water-repellency will greatly add to comfort.

Using common sense, along with reading and following the care instructions, will reduce the risk of most damage. If it does come to a repair, there are many you can do at home. Good advice can be found on the Web: it's worth the search and you could just avoid contributing to the daily volume of airfreight circling the globe.

## From the Billy

### The Wilderness Chef, John Pillans, whips up two tasty delights

#### Start from nothing

**Feeds:** three as an entrée

**Cooking time:** ten minutes

**Energy density:** 10.9 kJ/g or 7.4 kJ/mL

Think about adding a starter to your next extravagant dinner by combining ingredients you might be carrying anyway with a touch of flavour.

#### Ingredients:

- 2 sheets of mountain bread
- 50 g cream cheese
- 25 g cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon of chives

Roll the sheets of bread loosely and cut each into six equal strips, being careful not to make any creases. Lay a pair of the strips at 90° to each other in a V-shape and place a portion of the cheese and chive mixture at the join. Wrap the strips into a parcel, alternating sides, and tuck the ends under to close. Once all six parcels are ready, place them tightly in a pan and fry lightly, turning several times to crisp the bread and melt the cheese.

While this could never provide the bulk of a meal, it is an efficient way to add a little extra to an otherwise lacking meal by using basics from your pack in a new way.

#### Dessert in a flash

**Feeds:** three for dessert

**Cooking time:** two minutes

**Energy density:** 12.1 kJ/g or 8.8 kJ/mL

Having spent significant time searching for desserts suitable for bushwalking, wowing companions and bystanders along the way with my tests but never finding a truly practical answer, I've developed a clever little recipe that returns so much for so little.

#### Ingredients:

- 100 g amaretto biscuits
- milk powder to make 500 mL
- chocolate mousse powder to make 600 mL
- 1 square of chocolate (85 per cent cocoa)

Place the powdered ingredients in a bowl and add enough cold water to make up the 500 mL of milk. Whisk the mixture and, as it starts to thicken, blend through the amaretto biscuits crushed coarsely. Once the mixture has set firm, top it with the chocolate, grated finely. Serve immediately.

The flavour of the amaretto is rather forward in this dish, with the bitter chocolate providing a counterpoint and an utterly adult flavour. Fast and light but big on expression, this dish is sure to start making regular appearances.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to Wild) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD or by email), are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: [ed.korladm@wild.com.au](mailto:ed.korladm@wild.com.au)

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Although the boys were not mechanically minded they quickly realised that the car hadn't just run out of petrol, Obi Obi Creek, Queensland. *Sean Marler*

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# Delta Series

with Protex™ base



The Delta Series by Sea to Summit is designed to be the ultimate expedition/ outdoor dinnerware. Our patent pending Protex™ hex pattern base reduces surface heat so hot meals are easier to handle. The food-grade, BPA-free Nylon 66 material has an incredible strength-to-weight ratio, it is impervious to odours and stains and it will not crack in extreme cold.

The Delta Bowl and the Delta Plate feature thumb grips with carabiner hang loops for storage and steep sides to make capturing the last morsel of food even easier. The Delta Mug and Delta InsulMug have hollow, cool-grip rims to provide an ergonomic hold option, creating a low profile and stable design without the need for a hard-to-pack handle. The Delta InsulMug uses an EVA ThermoSkin™ sleeve and dribble-proof sipper lid to keep hot drinks steaming. And finally, measurement increments feature inside all models for campsite culinary needs.



with  
Protex™ base



thumb grip  
with carabiner  
hang loop



volume  
measurements  
on side



made from  
durable nylon 66

Protex™ hex pattern base reduces surface  
heat so hot meals are easier to handle



**Delta Mug**

Holds 473ml | Weighs 62g



**Delta InsulMug**

Holds 473ml | Weighs 125g



**Delta Bowl**

Holds 800ml | Weighs 86g

**Delta Plate**

Holds 960ml | Weighs 118g